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Review

Summer 1985

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TO OUR READERS

A new book by an Editor of THE HUDSON REVIEW has recently been published. In accordance with our policy, the book will not be reviewed in these pages, but is listed below for the interest of our readers:

FREDERICK MORGAN: *The Fountain & Other Fables*. The Pterodactyl Press, \$20 casebound, \$15 softcover. Readers of THE HUDSON REVIEW many receive copies of the book postage-free by sending a check or money order to: The Pterodactyl Press, Main Street, Cumberland, Iowa 50843.

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The Best of Contemporary Poetry



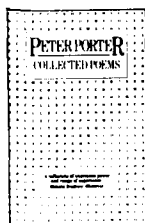
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Report:

CHARLES W. MILLARD

The Gardens of Kyoto in Summer

For M. B. W., hid in death's dateless night.

A CONVINCING ARGUMENT CAN BE MADE that gardens, particularly those of Kyoto, are the premier esthetic expression of traditional Japanese art. They, at least as much as painting, sculpture, and other media, are the products of great creative talents and embody the strength and sensitivity characteristic not only of the best Japanese art, but of all great art. Kyoto's preeminence in the field no doubt arises from its having been the Imperial capital and a center of Buddhist power (almost all the finest gardens are attached to temples) for almost a thousand years. In particular, the city benefitted from the presence of a series of major artists during what were the late Medieval and Renaissance periods in the West.

The medium of the gardens—vegetation—and the subtlety with which it is managed in Kyoto demand that any consideration of them be qualified by the season in which they are experienced. Since they are green in summer, scarlet with maples in autumn, white with snow in winter, and pink with cherry blossoms in spring—not to mention the coloristic contributions of azaleas, chrysanthemums, and dozens of other species of flowers—the gardens can be fully understood only by being observed for not less than a year. The present consideration is limited to their appearance during late August and early September.

Among the first surprises of Kyoto's gardens for a Westerner is the realization that they are meant less to be walked through than to be contemplated from specific and removed vantage points. The precisely delimited dry garden at Ryōan-ji, for example, cannot be entered and is viewable from only one side, while more elaborate compositions, such as that at Katsura, are embellished with pavilions intended as belvederes. Although there are vistas and hidden effects that reveal themselves only as one moves through Japanese gardens, as in the secret world visible through a cleft in the azaleas at Shisen-dō, the presence of more than one person in most gar-



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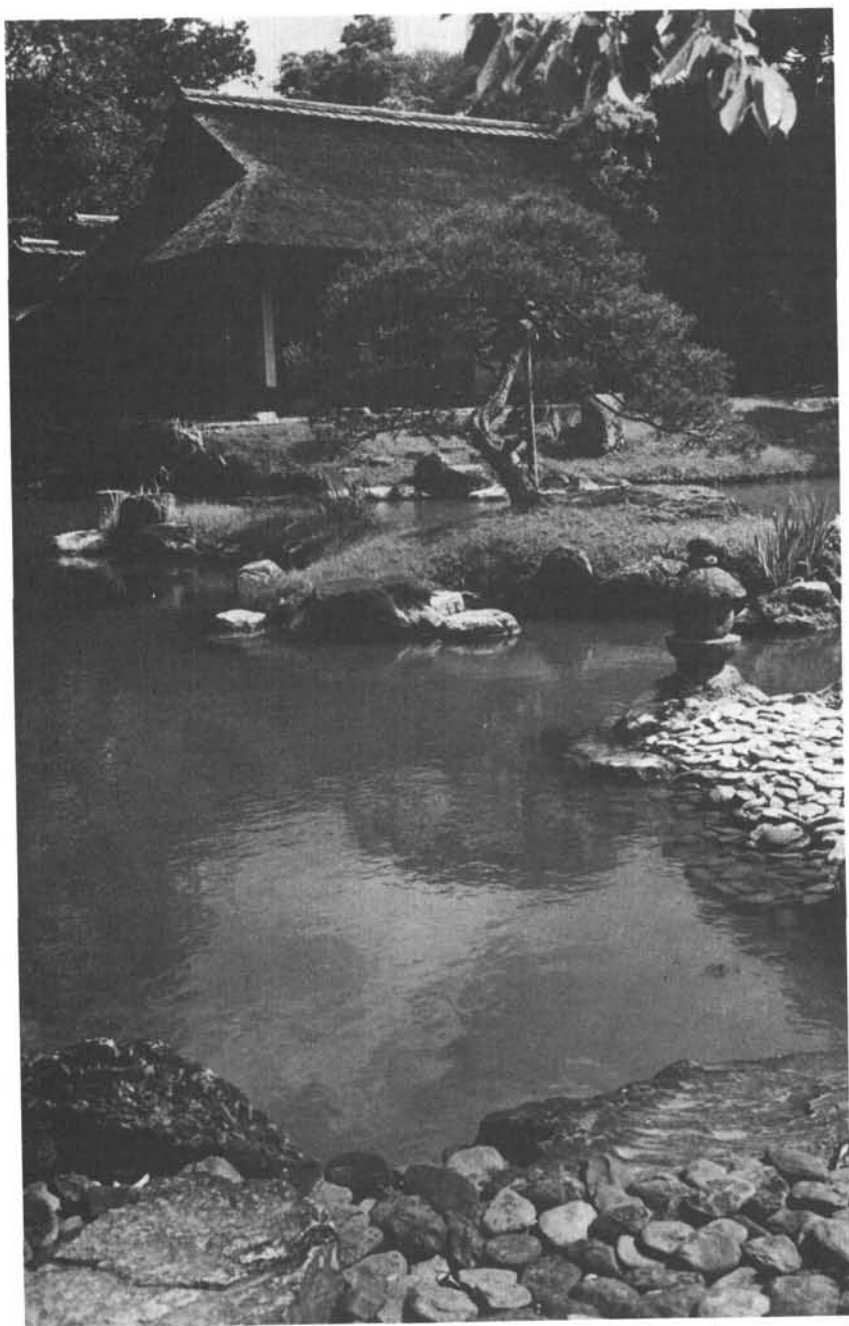
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dens seriously alters their scale. This is so in part because they are meant to be seen not merely from the shelter of buildings, but sitting down. Thus, their scale is usually calculated to be intimate in the foreground and to increase with distance. There is, moreover, the simple fact that people in the twentieth century are taller and broader than those by and for whom the gardens were designed. In any case, the gardens were not originally public and were to be experienced only by the few people who lived in the adjacent buildings. The abstractness of the ideas underlying Japanese gardens places them at considerable remove not only from English gardens, which are intended both to be pleasing to the eye (the more so when inhabited by animals) and to be roamed through, but from such formal French gardens as those of Vaux-le-Vicomte. Although the latter extend before one's eyes like a tapestry, their patterns and the regularity of their broad paths are conceived to tempt one out through the ground-level doors that give onto them to stroll from *parterre* to *parterre*.

Given that the gardens of Kyoto are intended to be wandered through with the eye, like a Chinese scroll, rather than with the feet, it comes as no surprise to discover that the best of them were designed by painters. Like paintings, the gardens, whether looked at or walked through, are meant to be contemplated, to be part of a continuing and reciprocal relationship with the beholder. And as in paintings the points of view from which they are seen are rigorously controlled. The buildings that mostly provide these points of view become integral parts of the experience of the garden, and the famous natural quality of Japanese architecture arises in part from this spiritual interdependency. This is not infrequently expressed in the forms and features of the structures themselves. One of the tea house pavilions in the grounds at Katsura, for example, is supported by posts made of untrimmed sapling trunks. These occur at the periphery of the building, at some remove from the tatami-matted floor on which one sits. As one looks at the garden, it is unclear whether the particular post one sees at any given moment is a man-made structural element or the trunk of a tree just beyond the eaves. This ambiguity ties building and garden together, while the trunk's powerful vertical, cut off by the eaves, provides a *repoussoir* against which the garden is seen. The effect is very much like certain devices adopted by Impressionism from Japanese painting. It is enhanced by the presence of a pine tree not far from the pavilion, which mediates between the abstracted trunk and the expanse of landscape beyond by being nearby like the former but a complete tree like those in the latter. The garden is thereby pictorialized to an extent unknown in the west. A different but related effect is achieved at Shisen-dō by the great tree that rises at the right of the garden as one views it from the house, the branches of which spread horizontally across the view just below the eaves. One is re-



Pavilion at Katsura.

Photographs courtesy of
Japan National Tourist Organization

mindful of nothing so much as the framing foreground tree of which Cézanne was so fond in his views of Mont Sainte Victoire.

The buildings from which Kyoto's gardens are contemplated function much like the frames of western paintings. Their openings, whether carefully shaped windows or opened *shōji*, inevitably embrace a particular view. It is part of the genius of the garden's designers that they were able to make every such view satisfactory, allowing for constant, even slight, changes of position within the building. Their art is, thus, related not only to painting but to sculpture as well, and takes the beholder's movement into account. The adaptability of this scheme is strikingly illustrated at Shisen-dō, where the *shōji* have been removed. What would originally have read as a sequence of vignettes of the garden separated by open *shōji* now appears as a continuous panorama. It is no less satisfactory on that account.

Perhaps the most telling example of the subtle calculation that makes Japanese gardens as a whole, and every element within them, coherent from any point of view is a pine composition at Ginkaku-ji. Two trees flanking the path into the garden, one substantially smaller than the other, are clipped so as to form a visual unit. Seen from any angle except immediately between them, it is virtually impossible to perceive these pines as other than a single entity, even when one knows they are distinct. Such devices accentuate the fact that *nothing* in a Japanese garden is unplanned. Every shape, placement, and color, and almost every sound and movement, is calculated by the artist, even to the vegetation on the hillsides that occasionally form backdrops against which more manicured nature is presented. The full effect of such gardens depends, therefore, on the continuous and perfect maintenance that assures that bushes and trees will always be trimmed to the shapes intended for them, flowers always blooming where their colors are most effective, etc.

The materials available to the Japanese garden designer seem to be numberless. They begin with the interior spaces of the house, temple, or pavilion from which the garden is to be viewed, which may be either given or created by another. These broad, tranquilizing, and largely uninhabited spaces, defined by sliding screens and *shōji*, open one into the other in a sequence that ends only with a final view into the garden. Not infrequently, such vistas are diagonal, giving added complexity and variety to the experience. Outside, the designer is able to shape less restrained spaces, placing trees and bushes not in linear sequence but so that they call to one another across the total composition. He can use a complete range of greens, from almost white to almost black, inflected in late summer with the grays of rocks and water, the cold white of gravel and dressed stone, the creamy white of water lilies, the rusty red of pine trunks, and the gold and yellow of carp. He has an almost limitless variety of scale, from moss to massive trees, and of shape, from the

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compactness of clipped azaleas to the indistinctness of billowy bamboo. There is an infinity of textures available to him—the velvety softness of moss, the discrete precision of maple leaves, the featheriness of bamboo, the shiny smoothness of lily pads, and the rough bark of pines with the spiky punctuation of their needles. Moreover there is sound, created by wind in the trees, by the splashing and dripping of water, or by such manmade devices as the bamboo pipe that periodically falls against a rock, embellishing what is otherwise still and soft with its dry, hollow thud. There is also the movement that creates the sound, such as the waving of the trees and the running, dripping, and splashing of water, or is divorced from it, as in the lazy swimming of carp. Insofar as possible, such movement is carefully controlled, witness the waterfall at Nanzen-in in which water is made to splatter from a rock as if it were the wildest form of flung-ink calligraphy.

Perhaps the most sympathetic of the green gardens in Kyoto is that of Shisen-dō, a Zen samurai's retreat. Modest in size, as is any Japanese garden when compared with the achievements of a Le Nôtre, it is extraordinarily reposeful in effect. It is on two levels, of which only the upper is visible from the house. Framed by a large tree, and distanced slightly from the building by fine raked gravel, its most obvious feature is a series of compactly clipped, rounded azaleas. A small stone pagoda arising from among these bushes works one of those miracles of scale at which the Japanese are so adept by suggesting that the bushes are a range of mountains in which a real structure is set, as at Kiomizu. As one descends to the lower level, most effectively seen from a tea house placed there for the purpose, the garden becomes less obviously controlled. A rivulet issues from under the azaleas into a pond in which grow lilies and grasses, and as one proceeds further, the garden ends in an apparently wild hillside. In one sense, each portion of the garden is independent of the other, and the area visible from the house (or that visible from the tea house) is entirely satisfactory on its own. But taken together each part completes the other, enriching the esthetic experience in such a way that, having explored the whole, one cannot imagine one without the other. Each subsequent experience of part of the garden is inevitably enhanced by one's memory of the remainder. A similar effect is achieved in a more integrated manner at the Imperial villa of Katsura, which is graced with a garden of somewhat the same character as that at Shisen-dō, conceived on a less intimate scale. Within the grounds are four tea houses, one for each season, each with a different view calculated to concentrate not only the experience of the tea ceremony but the time of year at which it takes place and, consequently, one's enjoyment of the garden. The autumn tea house, for example, has views in two directions. One of these encompasses the pond visible from all the pavilions, most movingly seen by moonlight. The other looks onto a hillside of maples, which would be brilliant in the fall.

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This prose poem was written as an introduction to Leon Chang's *La calligraphie chinoise* (1971). It is included in *New Directions 48* (NDP579, \$9.95), and is available in a slipcased limited edition of 150 numbered copies signed by the author and the translator, Gustaf Sobin, designed by Leslie Miller, handprinted at the Grenfell Press on Rives mold-made paper, and handbound by Claudia Cohen in full linen overboards. \$150.00

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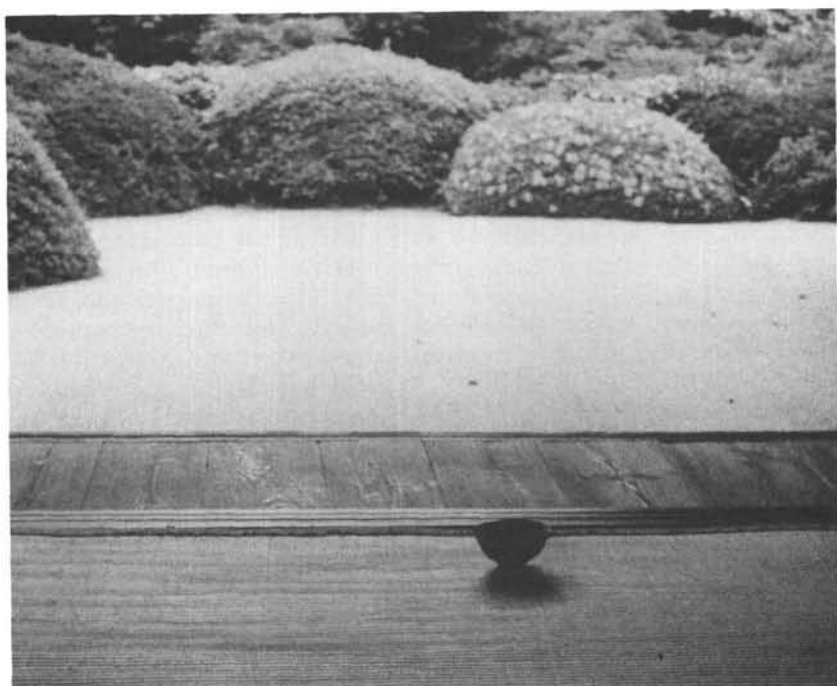
SOPHOKLES/WOMEN OF TRACHIS

Pound's version of *Women of Trachis* was first published by New Directions in 1957. Some twenty years earlier, in 1938, Pound had complained that there "were no translations of these plays that an aware man can read without deadly boredom." He himself, as it turned out, supplied the remedy. "Ezra Pound's poetic translation is masterly and has an electrifying effect" (*Library Journal*). NDP597, \$6.95

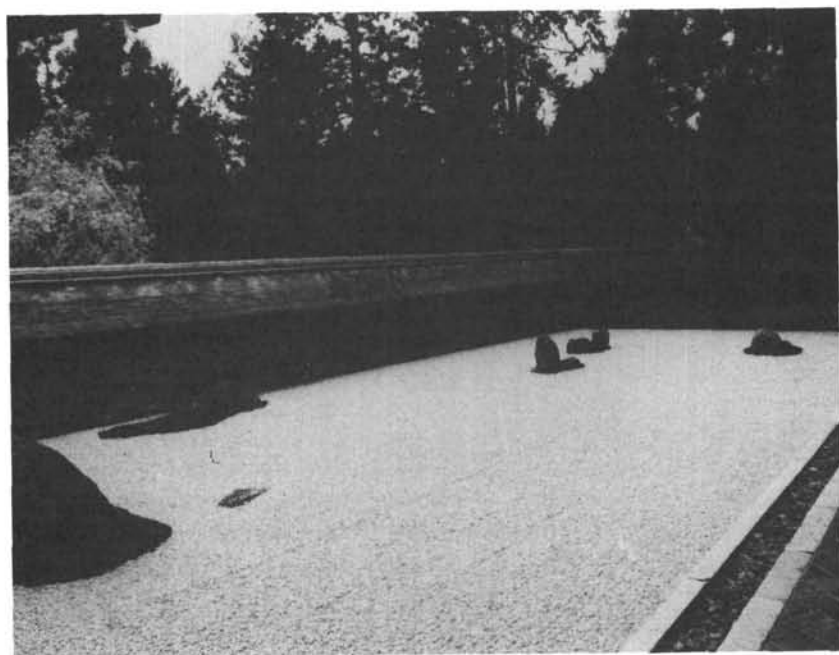
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The most surprising garden in Kyoto, and in many ways the finest, combines the planted water garden typical of Shisen-dō and Katsura with the intellectuality of a Zen dry garden. Designed by Sōami, it is the garden of Ginkaku-ji, the never-completed silver pavilion, a masterpiece of subtlety, delicacy, and austerity. It is entered down a long path bordered with manicured hedges some fifteen feet high. A line apparently parallel with the ground is clipped into each hedge about halfway to its top, and it takes considerable concentration or repeated experience of the allée to realize that as one enters either the line rises slightly or the ground descends. One is, thus, imperceptibly led from the quotidian world into an environment of a different scale and nature. After passing through a handsome small gravel garden with trees (the present path of entry is probably not that originally intended), one is immediately confronted with what is surely the most remarkable and cerebral phenomenon to be found in any garden in the world. A large sand garden extends from the main temple building almost to the lakeside pavilion, and consists of nothing more than a truncated cone some eight feet high and a large flat-topped, free-form area, banked up about eighteen inches from the ground, the top of which is alternately smooth and raked in broad bands. These two sand constructions confront each other, the garden of which they are part, and the beholder with what can only be described as an absoluteness that defies accommodation. Attempts to identify the cone as Fuji and the flat extent as the China Sea are feeble at best. They are efforts to explain something that not only resists explanation but refuses to make the slightest concession to feeling or ratiocination, something that seems to be trying to break through to some underlying and unitary level of consciousness at which it and its beholder will be simultaneously distinct and identical. Beyond this remarkable construction stretches one of the most benign and subtly thought out gardens in Kyoto. In part a cultivated garden with a pond, in part a wild garden with a waterfall, and in part a serene moss garden, it is graced with the harmonious silver pavilion. Not only is this structure more reticent and delicate in proportion than the golden pavilion that inspired it (Kinkaku-ji), but had it been silver-leaved as intended its effect would have enhanced, and been enhanced by, the green garden in which it is set. It would have had a lunar reticence in striking contrast to the opulent gold of Kinkaku-ji and, indeed, both it and the sand garden would have been most effective by moonlight. Taken as a whole, Ginkaku-ji is a manmade universe of unusual complexity, power, and reticence, and among the greatest esthetic accomplishments in Japan.

The different types of garden confronted so starkly at Ginkaku-ji are developed separately, or subtly combined, elsewhere in Kyoto. At Ryōan-ji, the dry garden by itself is brought to a pinnacle of perfection. Here, in a roughly tennis court-shaped space surrounded



Azalea garden of Shisen-dō.



Dry garden at Ryōan-ji.

on three sides by a wall and on the fourth by a temple, white gravel and fifteen stones have been used to create a composition that has been described as islands in a sea or mountain peaks above the clouds. Like Ginkaku-ji, however, although less austere, Ryōan-ji demands acceptance rather than explication. The gravel is raked around the worn and cratered stones, and in long striations elsewhere. The whole is so exposed that from photographs and descriptions one expects a barren and puritanically cold effect. Nothing could be further from reality. Without being in any way baroque, the result is tremendously rich. The richness results from the texture and coloristic variation of the gravel, the unevenness of the ground over which it is placed, the pattern and finesse of the raking, the character of the stones and sensitivity of their relationships, and the behavior of the daylight, which not only inflects the gravel but casts shadows into the garden from the trees beyond its wall. It is, thus, a garden devoid of vegetation that is immutable and constantly in flux. Its immutability would indeed be barren without the flux, while the effect of flux would be imperceptible without the immutability. In synthesizing what is kept separate at Ginkaku-ji, it achieves an external harmony that frees the beholder from himself being the agent of harmony.

At the Koke-dera of Saihō-ji, precisely the opposite means are used. A garden with over 100 varieties of moss, its gently undulating emerald carpet is inflected by the trunks of artfully placed trees, which rise up some distance before their branches flower. The result is a sort of outdoor building, one of the few Kyoto gardens that needs primarily to be walked through. Since it is almost entirely a composition in green, the Koke-dera is not only a garden of particular harmony but is the quintessential summer garden. The filtering of the sunlight through the trees, unlike the dappling of Ryōan-ji, emphasizes its unworldly reticence. This effect is enhanced by the garden's indefinite scale, partly a result of the absence of emphatic forms. If austerity, however rich, characterizes Ryōan-ji, the Koke-dera is an oasis of gentleness. After a late summer rain and under a fitful sun it is an experience of yielding calm and profound coherence. The extreme economy of its means results in its also being a synthesis of apparent opposites, bringing together those strains that were separated at Ginkaku-ji, but in a manner diametrically opposed to that of Ryōan-ji. Here one is immediately aware of spiritual intensity and mechanical complexity resulting in an effect of straightforward simplicity. This reconciliation of opposites not only makes the Koke-dera, like most of Kyoto's gardens, a concrete expression of what is most profound in the spirit and philosophy of Japan, but identifies it as a phenomenon of the highest esthetic order.

DAVID EHRENFELD

The Roots of Prophecy: Orwell and Nature

Futurology notwithstanding, nobody can foretell the future. That does not mean that there are no true prophets—only that our understanding of what is prophecy has become confused. In this most populous of centuries we have had our share of prophets. Among those who have written in English, names such as C. S. Lewis, E. F. Schumacher, James Burnham, Lewis Mumford, and Jane Jacobs would be prominent on lists of prophets, although not always together on the same lists. But there would be one name on nearly every list, the name of George Orwell.

Oddly enough, most people who associate Orwell with the idea of prophecy do so because of *1984* and *Animal Farm*, while the main body of his prophetic writings, the essays and the remaining novels, are known to a much smaller group of readers. To the majority, then, who search *1984* for a description of the present, Orwell is bound to disappoint as prophet; many of the special features of *1984* remain fictional. Even in the Soviet Union the houses are not equipped with two-way video sets monitored by the KGB, and no technology of brainwashing has been able to overcome the spirit of a Mendelevich or a Sakharov. Moreover, unlike the script of *1984*, world power has not been partitioned among three superstates: instead we see giant Russia struggling to keep a pitiful toehold in Afghanistan, the United States losing its tiny beachhead in Lebanon and bogged down in Central America, while China, with a billion people, is hamstrung in Southeast Asia by Vietnam. A mere handful of terrorists with minimal equipment and a little luck can now throw any nation on earth into paroxysms of impotent rage. None of this is in *1984*.

Nevertheless, Orwell was a prophet in the classical sense. The biblical prophets, themselves, were not the kind of holy

fortunetellers that the word prophet has come to signify. According to *Exodus*, Moses knew that God could be trusted to care for the children of Israel in the wilderness, yet he did not have the faintest inkling beforehand that they would be fed with quails and manna.

The business of prophecy is not foretelling the future; rather it is *describing the present* with exceptional truthfulness and accuracy. Once this is done—and it is an overwhelmingly difficult task—then it can be seen that certain broad aspects of the future have become self-evident, while other features, including many of the details, remain shrouded in mystery. This is prophecy.

Describing the present so that it reveals part of the future is an act that requires far more than intellect in all but the simplest instances. A mere catalog of facts is not a useful description of the present (or any good computer could be programmed for prophecy); the facts must be sorted subjectively and selected by a human being who is skilled at such things. But this subjective sorting, although necessary, is fraught with danger. In most of us, the process is confounded by emotions or feelings—love, hatred, fear, envy—of which we may be only dimly aware. What emerges is not a description of the present; rather it is the portrait of a personal fantasy of the present.

Orwell never rejected the emotional parts of thought and analysis. Indeed to do so, assuming that it could be done, would render the products of such thought worthless and inane. What he said was that for analysis to succeed in mirroring and clarifying reality, the emotional, subjective side of it cannot be buried in the unconscious mind of the analyzer. In his “London Letter” to *Partisan Review*¹, written in the winter of 1944, Orwell wrote with his characteristic understatement:

I believe that it is possible to be more objective than most of us are, but that it involves a *moral* effort. One cannot get away from one’s own subjective feelings, but at least one can know what they are and make allowance for them.

To give a brief example, it is impossible to read Orwell’s writings without perceiving a faint but evident strain of anti-

¹ The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, 3: As I Please: 1943-1945, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$6.95p.

Semitism. This might be disturbing if it were not for the remarkable fact that in 1945 he took the time to gather up the threads of his own anti-Semitism, examine them critically as if they belonged to someone else, and use them as starting material upon which to base one of the finest essays ever written on the subject. It is easy to be objective about such topics as sea urchins or the square root of two, Orwell noted, but not about things that personally matter.

What vitiates nearly all that is written about anti-Semitism is the assumption in the writer's mind that *he himself* is immune to it. "Since I know that anti-Semitism is irrational," he argues, "it follows that I do not share it." He thus fails to start his investigation in the one place where he could get hold of some reliable evidence—that is, in his own mind.²

There is another essential ingredient of prophecy besides brains and the capacity to examine critically one's own subjective feelings: it is a sense of responsibility for the words one uses. Orwell had that, too. In 1941, in his essay called "The Lion and the Unicorn,"³ he criticized his fellow socialists and left-wing intellectuals as having "little in them except the irresponsible carping of people who have never been and never expect to be in a position of power." Until the publication of the American edition of *Animal Farm*, a few years before his death, Orwell himself had no power of any consequence—yet he weighed and measured his words with a sense of responsibility that could have been no greater if he had been prime minister.

But if these are the necessary pre-conditions of prophecy, they are yet by themselves not sufficient to ensure its greatness. For that we have to look beyond the person for an independent standard against which things and events can be measured. Just as the internal biological clock of an animal or plant must be "set" by some independent time-giving event such as sunrise, so the prophet needs a proper set of weights and measures against which to balance and compare the happenings of the world. For the biblical prophets, this independent standard was the word of God as embodied in the commandments. Some of the modern prophets—C. S. Lewis and

² Ibid., p 340.

³ The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, 2: My Country Right or Left: 1940-1943, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$6.95p.

E. F. Schumacher, for example—have used the same standard. George Orwell, who did not believe in God, did not accept this option. Yet the brilliance of his prophecy is evident: one only has to recognize the sordid Orwellian newspeak that is an integral and necessary part of the nuclear arms race, of the Central American invasions, of the Olympics debacle, of the Agent Orange tragedy, and of a thousand other happenings that flash by on the television screens—all of which were implicitly or explicitly described in Orwell's writings—to see his prophetic genius.

If not the word of God, what was the external standard that enabled Orwell to describe his world and ours with such faithfulness to present and future reality? For anyone who ventures beyond 1984 in Orwell's writings, this is not a hard question to answer. Fortunately for us, for we need prophets in this century of overwhelming and turbulent change, Orwell had a profound understanding both of nature and of humanity's place in it. He knew nature from encounter not from intellect. Awareness of the natural world was with him constantly. Nature was his independent standard, the open secret of his prophetic vision.

What was nature to George Orwell? Simply put, I believe it was his model, his example of certain qualities that he wanted to emulate and did emulate in his life and in the art that was his work. They are also the qualities that he used as a kind of reference standard, a measuring stick, in his analysis of the changing life of his and our times. There are at least three of these qualities of nature that seem to have been important to Orwell—my own arbitrary categories, it's true, but perhaps no less real for that. The first of these qualities or properties of nature is *honesty*; the second I have to describe with four different but related words, *reliability/continuity/durability/resilience*; the third property of nature that was important to Orwell is its *beauty* and *serenity*.

Honesty:

Honesty was the hallmark of Orwell's personal style and method. In his essay called "Why I Write,"⁴ he noted that

⁴ The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, 1: An Age Like This: 1920-1940, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$8.95p.

from the beginning of his career he had “a power of facing unpleasant facts.” Often these facts were about himself, his own behavior. We see this in his autobiographical writings, such as the following brief passage from *Down and Out in Paris and London*.⁵ Orwell was working as a dishwasher in a horrible Parisian restaurant; the hours were very long, the pay was minuscule, everyone was always tired.

We quarrelled over things of inconceivable pettiness. The dustbin, for instance, was an unending source of quarrels—whether it should be put where I wanted it, which was in the cook’s way, or where she wanted it, which was between me and the sink. Once she nagged and nagged until at last, in pure spite, I lifted the dustbin up and put it out in the middle of the floor, where she was bound to trip over it.

“Now, you cow,” I said, “move it yourself.”

Poor old woman, it was too heavy for her to lift, and she sat down, put her head on the table and burst out crying. And I jeered at her.

How many of us living through such a scene would remember it that way, let alone put it down in indelible print for anyone to read? Nature, Orwell’s external standard of honesty, also never varnishes itself: it is exactly what it is, always. One doesn’t look at a beechwoods, a marsh, or a stream and think, “it’s lying to me.” We encounter an awareness of nature’s honesty everywhere in Orwell’s writing, but never more vividly expressed than in his wonderful, imperfect novel, *Coming Up For Air*.⁶ In this novel the hero, whose name is also George, describes his love of fishing as a child, and the thrill of his discovery of a tiny deep pool that nobody else knew about, one that contained enormous fish.

You had to fight your way through a sort of jungle of blackberry bushes and rotten boughs that had fallen off the trees. I struggled through it for about fifty yards, and then suddenly there was a clearing and I came to another pool which I had never known existed. . . .it was very clear water and immensely deep. . . .I hung

⁵ *Down and Out in Paris and London*, by George Orwell. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$3.95p.

⁶ *Coming Up For Air*, by George Orwell. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$4.95p.

about for a bit, enjoying the dampness and the rotten boggy smell. . . . And then I saw something that almost made me jump out of my skin. . . .

What he saw was a school of gigantic carp.

As things turn out, he never gets a chance to fish for them until as a middle-aged man he returns home after an absence of thirty years and visits the old estate whose grounds the pool was on. The manor house is now an insane asylum, and the grounds have become a separate, suburban housing development. He meets a friendly old man who tells him:

"We live in the midst of Nature up here. No connection with the town down there"—he waved a hand in the direction of Lower Binfield—"the dark Satanic mills—te-hee!" . . .

Immediately, as though I'd asked him, he began telling me all about the Upper Binfield Estate, and young Edward Watkin, the architect, who had such a feeling for the Tudor, and was such a wonderful fellow at finding genuine Elizabethan beams in old farmhouses and buying them at ridiculous prices.

Of course the pool is now a garbage dump, drained and already half-filled with tin cans. But the residents have preserved a small patch of the original woods. The old man says:

"That is sacrosanct. We have decided never to build in it. It is sacred to the young people. Nature, you know. . . . We call it the Pixy Glen." . . .

The Pixy Glen. . . . And they'd filled my pool up with tin cans. God rot them and bust them! Say what you like—call it silly, childish, anything—but doesn't it make you puke sometimes to see what they're doing to England, with their birdbaths and their plaster gnomes, and their pixies and tin cans, where the beechwoods used to be?

Clearly what bothered Orwell here, even more than the pollution and the rubbish and the destruction, was the dishonesty, the corruption of the inherent honesty of nature.

But nature to Orwell is not all beechwoods and pristine pools—far from it. In the same book, George explains his uneasy feelings about the new, big, raw cemetery outside of town, away from the houses and stores.

We had our churchyard plumb in the middle of the town, you passed it every day, you saw the spot where your grandfather was

lying and where some day you were going to lie yourself. We didn't mind looking at the dead. In hot weather, I admit, we also had to smell them, because some of the family vaults weren't too well sealed.

The honesty of nature contrasted sharply with the new world that was beginning to emerge in the 1930s and which may not yet in our day have hit its full stride. A world in which two plus two may equal five, war is peace, and freedom slavery. It is no coincidence that in 1984,⁷ the last honest, free conversation held by Winston and Julia concerns nature.

"Do you remember," he said, "the thrush that sang to us, that first day, at the edge of the wood?"

"He wasn't singing to us," said Julia. "He was singing to please himself. Not even that. He was just singing."

Note that she takes great pains to be scrupulously honest about nature. Nature, like people, deserves nothing less than full honesty; it is itself the model of honesty. Seconds after this conversation takes place, the thought police burst into the room, and that for all practical purposes is the end of the story.

Illusion, unreality, deception, were becoming institutionalized, a part of everyday life. Orwell, using nature as his measuring stick, saw it very early: for example long before television had realized any of its potential as an instrument for the manipulation of truth. In the beginning of *Coming Up For Air* there is a scene in which George Bowling buys a frankfurter in a coffee shop and gets a surprise:

The frankfurter had a rubber skin, of course, and my temporary teeth weren't much of a fit. I had to do a kind of sawing movement before I could get my teeth through the skin. And then suddenly—pop! The thing burst in my mouth like a rotten pear. A sort of horrible soft stuff was oozing all over my tongue. . . . It was *fish*! A sausage, a thing calling itself a frankfurter, filled with fish! . . . That's the way we're going nowadays. . . . everything made out of something else. Celluloid, rubber, chromium-steel everywhere, arc-lamps blazing all night, glass roofs over your head, radios all playing the same tune, no vegetation left, everything cemented over, mock-turtles grazing under the neutral fruit trees. But when you come down to brass tacks and get your teeth into

⁷ 1984, by George Orwell. Signet/New American Library. \$2.95p.

something solid . . . that's what you get. Rotten fish in a rubber skin.

Reliability/Continuity/Durability/Resilience:

I can't give more than a tiny sample of the many instances in which Orwell acknowledges and pays his respects to this side of nature. The seasons of nature—not a vague awareness but an incredibly acute perception—are always with him; indeed that awareness was one of his main anchors to windward.

From a letter to his friend, Richard Rees, April, 1936:⁸

It is still beastly cold and everything very late. I have found no nests except thrushes and blackbirds and have not heard the cuckoo or seen a swallow—I usually see my first about the 14th. The blackthorn is out and there are plenty of primroses and cowslips but the hedges are still very bare.

Part of the only surviving letter to his first wife, from a hospital bed. April, 1937:⁸

The weather is much better, real spring most of the time, and the look of the earth makes me think of our garden at home and wonder whether the wallflowers are coming out. . . .

Nothing can stop the cycle of nature. From an essay called "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad,"⁹ 1946:

As for spring, not even the narrow and gloomy streets round the Bank of England are quite able to exclude it. It comes seeping in everywhere, like one of those new poison gasses which pass through all filters.

Some of his most sparkling and cheerful writing was inspired by the events of the natural cycle. From the same essay on the common toad:

Before the swallow, before the daffodil, and not much later than the snowdrop, the common toad salutes the coming of spring after his own fashion, which is to emerge from a hole in the ground, where he has lain buried since the previous autumn, and

⁸ The Collected Essays. Vol. 1, *op. cit.*

⁹ The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, 4: In Front of Your Nose: 1945-1950, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$6.95p.

crawl as rapidly as possible towards the nearest suitable patch of water. . . . At this period, after his long fast, the toad has a very spiritual look, like a strict Anglo-Catholic towards the end of Lent.

In *Coming Up For Air*, George Bowling remembers the foods that grew wild in the hedges at different seasons:

In July there were dewberries—but they're very rare—and the blackberries were getting red enough to eat. In September there were sloes and hazel-nuts. The best hazel-nuts were always out of reach. Later on there were beech-nuts and crab-apples.

It is important to point out that this is not wilderness that he is writing about. It is an English hedge, a form of agriculture, planted and maintained only by skilled, hard-working people. Orwell was no wilderness purist: he valued nature most when it had been shaped and molded by human beings who understood and respected it.

The durability of nature has a remarkable power to atone for, almost to blot out human evil. Orwell describes this in his 1946 essay, "A Good Word for the Vicar of Bray."¹⁰ The Vicar of Bray, immortalized in a humorous folk song, was an eighteenth-century English churchman who became notorious for changing his religious and political allegiances to curry favor with every new government or king that came to power during his long tenure. Orwell visited his church and discovered that a magnificent yew tree, planted by the Vicar, still survived.

. . . after this lapse of time, all that is left of him is a comic song and a beautiful tree, which has rested the eyes of generation after generation and must surely have outweighed any bad effects which he produced by his political quislingism. . . .

The planting of a tree, especially one of the long-living hardwood trees, is a gift which you can make to posterity at almost no cost and with almost no trouble, and if the tree takes root it will far outlive the visible effect of any of your other actions, good or evil. . . .

In that essay he describes his feelings upon returning to a cottage where he once lived, and looking at the roses, goose-

¹⁰ The Collected Essays. Vol. 4, *op. cit.*

berry bushes, and fruit trees he had planted ten years earlier. In particular, he was proud of one fruit tree, a Cox's Orange Pippin, the finest English variety of apple.

I maintain that it was a public-spirited action to plant that Cox, for these trees do not fruit quickly and I did not expect to stay there long. I never had an apple off it myself, but it looks as if someone else will have quite a lot. By their fruits ye shall know them, and the Cox's Orange Pippin is a good fruit to be known by.

... A thing that I regret, and which I will try to remedy some time, is that I have never in my life planted a walnut. Nobody does plant them nowadays—when you see a walnut it is almost invariably an old tree. If you plant a walnut you are planting it for your grandchildren, and who cares a damn for his grandchildren?

What Orwell felt very strongly is that there is something missing from modern life, and an understanding of nature told him what that something is. This is from *Coming Up For Air*:

... people then had something that we haven't got now. ... they didn't think of the future as something to be terrified of. It isn't that life was softer then than now. Actually it was harsher. People on the whole worked harder, lived less comfortably and died more painfully. ... And yet what was it that people had in those days? A feeling of security, even when they weren't secure. More exactly, it was a feeling of continuity.

A few pages on he tells what replaced that continuity.

There was a temporary feeling about everything.

And for life to produce such a feeling—Orwell doesn't have to put it in words—is unnatural, a departure from nature.

Beauty and Serenity:

The third property of nature that was of value to Orwell was its beauty and serenity. He was keenly attuned to it and found it in unlikely places. Again from his essay on the common toad. When the toad emerges from his winter burrow,

... his body is shrunken, and by contrast his eyes look abnormally large. This allows one to notice, what one might not at another

time, that a toad has about the most beautiful eye of any living creature. It is like gold, or more exactly it is like the golden-coloured semi-precious stone which one sometimes sees in signet rings, and which I think is called a chrysoberyl.

Later in this essay, after dismissing the argument that only people who live in cities and don't know its brutal side can love nature, he states his idea of the usefulness of natural beauty.

I have always suspected that if our economic and political problems are ever really solved, life will become simpler instead of more complex. . . . I think that by retaining one's childhood love of such things as trees, fishes, butterflies and—to return to my first instance—toads, one makes a peaceful and decent future a little more probable, and that by preaching the doctrine that nothing is to be admired except steel and concrete, one merely makes it a little surer that human beings will have no outlet for their surplus energy except in hatred and leader worship.

Again, I want to stress that Orwell is not talking about wilderness so much as environments in which people and nature interact in a positive way. The characteristics and richness of this kind of environment have only recently become appreciated by ecologists and other biologists who study natural communities. For example, in Gary Nabhan's book, *The Desert Smells Like Rain*,¹¹ he describes two nearby and physically very similar oases in the Sonoran Desert. One, in Mexico, is farmed according to traditional native methods, by an elderly Papago farmer. The other, just over the border in the United States, is federally protected as a bird sanctuary and all farming and other human exploitative use has been prohibited for years. The farmed oasis is home to twice as many species of birds as the bird sanctuary.

Natural beauty, for Orwell, is a subjective quality perceived by people in places where they live and work, and doesn't necessarily pertain to something you might want to photograph for a picture postcard. In his odd and revealing novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter*,¹² Orwell has a memorable chapter in which the daughter, a victim of amnesia, has wandered off to pick hops with a motley assortment of gypsies, tramps, mi-

¹¹ *The Desert Smells Like Rain*, by Gary Nabhan. North Point Press. \$15.00.

¹² *A Clergyman's Daughter*, by George Orwell. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$8.95p.

grant farmworkers, and Cockney tradespeople down from London. He wrote the scene from personal experience described elsewhere in his notes and diaries. The pickers, who slept in piles of straw in drafty wooden shacks, got up at the first light of dawn, cooked their breakfast and dinner—bacon, bread fried in bacon grease, and tea, for both meals—ate the breakfast portion, and carried the dinner in a pail out to the hop fields a mile or two away. Moving the heavy bins into position, they dragged the equally heavy hop bins over them and

... began tearing off the heavy bunches of hops. At that hour of the morning you could only pick slowly and awkwardly. Your hands were still stiff and the coldness of the dew numbed them, and the hops were wet and slippery. . . .

The stems of the bins were covered by minute thorns which within two or three days had torn the skin of your hands to pieces. In the morning it was a torment to begin picking when your fingers were almost too stiff to bend and bleeding in a dozen places; but the pain wore off when the cuts had reopened and the blood was flowing freely.

At noon they ate their bacon sandwiches and drank their tea, then picked until five or six in the evening. Wages were one-and-a-half to two pence a bushel—you might earn about ten shillings a week, but some of this was likely to be withheld by the paymaster on one pretext or another. When it rained, which was often, you waited under the dripping bins unable to pick, and might get ten or eleven pennies for the day's work. Now keep all this in mind and read Orwell's description of the Cockneys who came from London in the hop-picking season:

... respectable East Enders, costermongers and small shopkeepers and the like, who came hop-picking for a holiday and were satisfied if they earned enough for their fare both ways and a bit of fun on Saturday nights.

Nowhere do I find any indication that this idea of a holiday surprised Orwell. He knew poverty well and had no rosy illusions about it. He lived in poverty for all but the last three and a half years of his life, and even then he was not by most standards a wealthy man. In 1948, for example, two years be-

fore his death, this greatest English essayist of his century wrote from a hospital tuberculosis ward to his friend Julian Symons to thank him for sending a ball point pen to replace the one he had used up. Orwell never romanticized poverty: he merely understood that the semi-natural greenery and quiet of a hop field on a chilly September morning was the only bit of beauty and peace that many people could ever have, and there is no hint in his account that he finds anything ludicrous, outrageous, or even sad in the idea of such a vacation.

In April of 1945, in a letter to his friend Anthony Powell, he described the sudden death of his first wife, Eileen, two weeks earlier, a victim of anesthesia during a minor operation, and then mentions his adopted son, Richard, who was at that time about a year old.

As soon as I can get a nurse and a house I shall remove him to the country, as I don't want him to learn to walk in London.

Why not, one might ask? After all, London is open for babies to walk in at all seasons. Surely he didn't mean that the child would learn to walk badly in London. I think the answer is plain: when his child made his first contact with the earth, without a mother, he wanted him to feel the beauty and serenity of a nurtured landscape.

Orwell's Contact With Nature:

Before exploring further the implications of Orwell's feeling for nature, I want to make a point that might not have been obvious so far. Orwell's contact with nature was not primarily intellectual, and certainly not forced or contrived. Unlike Thoreau, whose odes to nature rang false to some of the great naturalists who knew his work, and whose genius for the appreciation and description of the natural world was occasionally marred by misinformation,¹³ Orwell was always in solid touch with the earth, even in London, and rarely made

¹³ Bradford Torrey, who edited Thoreau's journals, wrote in his preface, dated 1906: "The truth appears to be that even of the commoner sorts of birds . . . Thoreau—during the greater part of his life, at least—knew . . . only a small proportion, wonderful as his knowledge seemed to those who, like Emerson, knew practically nothing." (The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau, Vol. I, ed. by Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen. Dover. \$30.00, 2 vols.)

mistakes about what he saw. He, too, had an amazing facility for observation of animals and plants, but exercised this not while living alone in the woods or on trips through the wilderness; instead his experience of nature was gained almost entirely through gardening, or, more properly, small farming. Orwell was in the tradition of Gilbert White, not William Bartram.

A letter to Eleanor Jaques, dated July 20, 1933, and signed Eric Blair, his real name:

The heat here is fearful but it is good for my marrows and pumpkins, which are swelling almost visibly. We have had lashings of peas, beans just beginning, potatoes rather poor, owing to the drought, I suppose. I have finished my novel [*Burmese Days*]. . . .¹⁴

A letter to Jack Common, from his new home at Wallington, April, 1936:

. . . it isn't what you might call luxurious, but it is as good as one could expect for 7/6 a week so near London. The garden is potentially good but has been left in the most frightful state I have ever seen. I am afraid it will be a year before I can get it nice.¹⁴

Orwell was in the Spanish Civil War and was wounded in the neck by a bullet and sent home. This is from a letter to Geoffrey Gorer, dated August, 1937.

The bullet went through my neck from front to back but skidded round both the carotid artery and the backbone in the most remarkable way. I have one vocal cord paralysed. . . . I am getting pretty well going with my book [*Homage to Catalonia*] and we are very busy trying to do something about the garden, which was in a ghastly mess when we got back. . . .¹⁴

Lest one think that Orwell planted only food, the following is an extract from another letter to Jack Common, from French Morocco, where Orwell was recovering from one of his bouts of tuberculosis in December, 1938.

The effects of the frost were very curious. Some nasturtiums I had sown earlier were withered up by it, but the . . . Bougainvillea, which is a tropical plant from the South Pacific, weren't affected.¹⁴

¹⁴ Collected Essays, Vol 1, *op. cit.*

Bougainvillea is in fact South American, but perhaps Orwell can be forgiven this rare slip.

There were no conditions of poor health (save for outright confinement in a hospital bed) or societal upheaval that could keep Orwell from planting and cultivating the earth. These activities were conditions of his existence, like breathing; there was nothing optional about them. From the wartime diary, April 22, 1941, during the bombing of Britain:

Have been 2 or 3 days at Wallington. Saturday night's blitz could easily be heard there. . . .

Sowed while at Wallington 40 or 50 lb of potatoes, which might give 200 to 600 lb according to the season, etc. It would be queer . . . if, when this autumn comes, those potatoes seem a more important achievement than all the articles, broadcasts, etc I shall have done this year.¹⁵

From the only surviving letter to his second wife, Sonia Brownell, dated April, 1947, two years before their marriage, from the Isle of Jura, where he had moved the day before, after being sick in bed:

. . . hardly a bud showing and I saw quite a lot of snow yesterday. However it's beautiful spring weather now and the plants I put in at the new year seem to be mostly alive. . . . I'm still wrestling with more or less virgin meadow, but I think by next year I'll have quite a nice garden here.¹⁶

And finally, another letter from Jura, to Julian Symons, October, 1948:

Richard is blooming. He is still I think backward about talking, but lively enough in other ways and really almost helpful about the farm and garden. Something tells me he won't be one for book-learning and that his bent is for mechanics. I shan't try to influence him, but if he grew up with the ambition of being a farmer I should be pleased. Of course that may be the only job left after the atom bombs.¹⁶

Richard Blair, whose father, George Orwell, died when Richard was about six years old, became a farmer. As for Orwell, the only thing that ever effectively kept him from work-

¹⁵ The Collected Essays. Vol. 2, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ The Collected Essays. Vol. 4, *op. cit.*

ing the land and from observing and loving nature was death itself.

God and Nature:

Having seen the depth of Orwell's commitment to nature, the logical question one might ask is whether there was a religious side to Orwell's feelings about the natural world, whether nature was for him in any way an expression of or substitute for the Deity. At the outset I should say that there is not a shred of evidence to indicate that this is the case. To anyone who reads Orwell with an effort at objectivity, it should be clear that at no time during his adult years did he worship God in nature, nor did he worship nature instead of God, nor did he worship God or nature in any other way, even a personal, idiosyncratic way. He didn't worship—not anything. Not God, not nature, not power, not money, not beauty, not love, not even art. He was not a worshipping type.

Some see his failure to believe in God as the principal flaw in his character; however it would be difficult to show that Orwell's lack of belief in any way marred his writing or, for that matter, his gift of prophecy. Indeed his lack of belief may actually have helped increase his impartiality in that emotionally charged arena of formal religion. Moreover, no one can accuse Orwell of insensitivity to the meaning of God in the lives of other people. Here is what Dorothy, the clergyman's daughter thinks as she struggles successfully to resolve her crisis of faith:

Since you exist, God must have created you. . . . He created you, and He will kill you, for His own purpose. But that purpose is inscrutable. It is in the nature of things that you can never discover it, and perhaps even if you did discover it you would be averse to it.

. . . There was, she saw clearly, no possible substitute for faith; no pagan acceptance of life as sufficient to itself, no pantheistic cheer-up stuff, no pseudo-religion of "progress" with visions of glittering Utopias and ant-heaps of steel and concrete. It is all or nothing. Either life on earth is a preparation for something greater and more lasting, or it is meaningless, dark and dreadful.

But Dorothy had lost her faith beyond all hope of recovery.

Without faith, what alternative to black despair was there for her? The narrator finds yet a third alternative:

She did not reflect, consciously, that the solution to her difficulty lay in accepting the fact that there was no solution; that if one gets on with the job that lies to hand, the ultimate purpose of the job fades into insignificance; that faith and no faith are very much the same provided that one is doing what is customary, useful and acceptable.

This was certainly Orwell speaking of and for himself. After he wrote that paragraph about getting on with the job, perhaps he went outside and planted a row of potatoes, a few hills of pumpkins, or even a Cox's Orange Pippin whose apples he would never get to taste.

Two Visions of Utopia:

A life in which human beings live in some kind of uneasy, imperfect, yet generally wholesome, productive, and durable equilibrium with nature was as close as Orwell came to a vision of Utopia, of paradise. But it wasn't his only vision of paradise—unlike most of us who have such dreams he had *two* visions, distinct although not unrelated, and these two views of a Utopian future set up a critical tension in his writings, especially his social and political writings, which is the bulk of them. Orwell, a socialist, also had a social vision of an ideal world in which no class of people or race or nationality would be exploited by any other, and in which people would share, more or less equally, whatever wealth might be forthcoming from a world that was not abused.

He knew every variety of exploitation from first-hand experience from a variety of perspectives: as a British colonial officer with the Imperial Police in Burma, as an anarchist soldier in the Spanish Civil War opposed to both Franco and the Communists, as a penniless tramp in France and England, and as an investigative reporter studying conditions in the British coal mines. He had a rare sympathy for the plight of others, although his honesty and detachment were always in evidence, regardless of his personal involvement. One would be hard-pressed to find, for example, a more sensitive portrait of the degrading effects of colonialism than the story, in

Burmese Days, of Dr. Veraswami, whose failure to get into the degenerate European Club becomes the mechanism of his destruction by his political enemies.¹⁷

There is no question about Orwell's fundamental socialism, just as there is no question about his fundamental atheism. But those who know his work are aware that he did not automatically accept the socialist party line, and that he started to break with many British socialists in the thirties when he concluded that the Russians were actually helping the fascists in Spain. By the time he published *Animal Farm*, in the mid-forties, he was one of Britain's leading anti-Soviet writers, perceiving Russia to be as much an enemy of socialism as the Nazis had been. Frequently overlooked, however, is the fact that Orwell had another source of disagreement with his fellow socialists, and although it attracted less attention than the flap over Russia it was much more fundamental.

Orwell claimed that every time he wrote something positive about nature he got dozens of letters from angry socialists calling him a bourgeois sentimentalist and saying that he ought to have more faith in progress and the ability of the machine to liberate the workers from oppression. In his essay on the common toad he wrote sarcastically, almost desperately:

Is it wicked to take a pleasure in spring. . . is it politically reprehensible, while we are all groaning, or at any rate ought to be groaning, under the shackles of the capitalist system, to point out that life is frequently more worth living because of a blackbird's song, a yellow elm tree in October, or some other natural phenomenon which does not cost money and does not have what the editors of left-wing newspapers call a class angle?

And he went on to ask the question,

If a man cannot enjoy the return of spring, why should he be happy in a labour-saving Utopia?

What Orwell understood, what gave him one of the greatest claims to the title of prophet, and what makes his prophecy useful and valid today—the idea he developed but never

¹⁷ *Burmese Days*, by George Orwell. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$3.95p.

had time to finish and polish—is that neither of the great contemporary social theory/systems, socialism and capitalism, has been able satisfactorily to encompass both human relationships *and* the problems of the environment. Socialism was his personal choice, but he knew that socialism, as practiced, does not have room for both people and their non-political world of nature and agriculture. To put it another way, the Soviet five-year plans' goals for agriculture have never been for the benefit of agriculture, rather they are for the immediate gratification of what the planners conceive to be the political and social needs of the state.¹⁸ Analogous statements, with minimal changes in wording, could be made about American agriculture. In both cases, the cost of leaving nature itself out of consideration has been incalculable.

In *The Road to Wigan Pier*,¹⁹ Orwell says repeatedly that machine civilization is here to stay, but that as long as we must live in such a machine-dominated, beehive society it is better that it be a socialist than a fascist one. Nevertheless,

Once Socialism is . . . established, those who can see through the swindle of "progress" will probably find themselves resisting. . . . In the machine-world they have got to be a sort of permanent opposition. . . .

This permanent opposition was not likely to be a majority.

There are now millions of people. . . .to whom the blaring of a radio is not only a more acceptable but a mere *normal* background to their thoughts than the lowing of cattle or the song of birds. The mechanization of the world could never proceed very far while taste. . . .remained uncorrupted, because in that case most of the products of the machine would be simply unwanted. In a healthy world there would be no demand for tinned food, aspirins, gramophones, gaspipe chairs, machine guns, daily newspapers, telephones, motor-cars, etc., etc.; and. . . .there would be a constant demand for the things the machine cannot produce. But meanwhile the machine is here, and its corrupting effects are almost irresistible.

¹⁸ Marshall Goldman wrote in *Environmental Pollution in the Soviet Union: The Spoils of Progress* (M.I.T. Press \$4.95p.) "Based on the Soviet experience so far, there is no evidence to indicate that nationalization of all the means of production in one country or throughout the world will provide any cure [at] all for environmental disruption."

¹⁹ *The Road to Wigan Pier*, by *George Orwell*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$3.95p.

For Orwell, the first task was to establish socialism, then, equally important, to “humanize” it, as he put it, to arrange the relationship between people and their natural environment in a way that permitted the greatest number to maximize their humanity. He didn’t have any practical suggestions about how to do this, and although he recognized that there are instabilities and self-destruct mechanisms built into the bureaucracy of machine society—what he called in his 1943 essay on “Poetry and the Microphone,”²⁰ the “loose ends and forgotten corners” in the “machine of government”—he did not develop the idea. Orwell never realized, as many scientists now do, that similar instabilities and limits exist in technology itself, especially in its interactions with nature, and that these instabilities and limits may be themselves capable of controlling the worst evils of machine life.

If Orwell had lived long enough to realize this, if he had lived into the age of nuclear power plant cancellations and the first stirrings of ecological agriculture, he might have explored the implications and found a measure of comfort in them. He might have realized that nature, although it can be damaged and mutilated, is not so easy to bring under control—that a world with a glass roof over it and concrete and plastic everywhere, although it may look possible on paper, is highly unstable and cannot work for very long. He might have seen that the Wellsian fantasies of technological control are just that, fantasies. And if he had reached that point, he might even have gotten to rethink some of his ideas about the possibilities of controlling human beings. But he didn’t live past the final flush of technological intoxication. He died when people still spoke of “atoms for peace.” In this instance, at least, his prophecy did not take him far enough.

So Orwell had two visions of Utopia: one a vision of a world in which nature is cherished and improved by a gentle and caring human civilization, and the other a vision of a world in which people treat each other decently and fairly, without exploitation. Ultimately, as we see in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the two visions came together in the picture of a “simpler,” “harder,” predominantly agricultural way of life in

²⁰ The Collected Essays. Vol. 2, *op. cit.*

which the machine is present but under human control and “‘progress’ is not definable as making the world safe for little fat men.” A world in which progress, itself, is not a form of exploitation.

But Orwell was the supreme realist of our time, and he knew that neither of his visions were close to attainment. What then do we do in the meantime? He gave his answer in the concluding paragraph of his essay on the common toad.

At any rate, spring is here, even in London N.1, and they can't stop you enjoying it. This is a satisfying reflection. How many a time have I stood watching the toads mating, or a pair of hares having a boxing match in the young corn, and thought of all the important persons who would stop me enjoying this if they could. But luckily they can't. So long as you are not actually ill, hungry, or immured in a prison or a holiday camp, spring is still spring. The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loud-speakers, but the earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it.

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SUSAN KENNEY

In Case You Don't Come Back

"Did you remember to flush the toilets?" Phil asks not long after they've left for Boston.

Sara slowly turns her head and stares at him. They haven't driven far, but too far to go back if the answer is no. She shrugs. "What can I say?" she says.

Phil gives her a quick exasperated look, then turns his attention back to his driving, both hands clenched tight around the steering wheel, the knuckles white as molars. "I just wish we hadn't left the house in such a mess," he says.

Sara, on the other hand, has just been congratulating herself on the way they left the house. It has taken her years to arrive at the point where she can now walk out and shut the door on anything. Still, she understands how Phil feels. "Of course I flushed the toilets," she says not unsympathetically. "The babysitter can take care of the rest."

"Oh my god, the babysitter," Phil groans, slumping against his seatbelt. "What's she going to think? If she shows up, that is," he adds ominously. They've driven off as soon as the kids got on the schoolbus, leaving the house not only in a mess but unattended, so they'll have plenty of time to make Phil's noon appointment at the hospital.

"Don't worry, she'll be there," Sara answers absently. She's trying to remember if she really did flush the toilets. For all her determined casualness she is still haunted by childhood recollections of those whirlwind cleanups "in case we don't come back," the whole family spurred on by her mother's cheerfully grim heckling: "You wouldn't want people to know we lived like pigs, now would you?" Not that she can blame her mother; Sara's father is one of the ones who did not come back, hoisting his new overnight bag one summer day, blowing them all kisses and departing forever at the age of 40, leaving behind a widow and three young children, very little money, and as is often the case with lawyers, no will.

Even now, though they both have wills—and matching powers of attorney thanks to a lawyer who, no stranger to life's ironies, insisted Sara was in more danger driving back and forth to Boston than Phil was having major surgery—Sara detects a certain thrill of doom, a sense of having goosed the gods by leaving the place in such a mess. If they were to be killed right now, whoever came in after them would get the shock of their lives; whiskers and dried toothpaste spit in the bathroom sink, crumbs on the table and down the cracks, beds hastily made up with last week's sheets, fly carcasses mouldering in the overhead lights, dust lying like gray plush along the windowsills and tops of doorways, layers of unexamined trash rising inexorably in the bottom of every closet, bureau drawer and cupboard, ready to spill out like so many guilty consciences. A veritable Pompeii of a mess, their sudden deaths falling over it like ash, transfixing it forever in people's minds. "Oh, yes, they lived like pigs." Oh come on now, Sara chides herself. Who cares? Besides, we'll never know the difference. "Anyway, she knows how we live," she says to Phil. "She won't be surprised."

Phil nods, says nothing more. The car drones on in the silence, seeming to acquire a momentum and direction of its own. As well it should, Sara thinks; it's certainly made this trip enough times. Meanwhile the conversation languishes, but Sara doesn't really mind. They never talk much on these trips anymore, but it doesn't really matter, since talking no longer seems to have the power it once did to change things. Besides, Sara thinks, things aren't so bad. The fact is, this is not even a trip worth getting cleaned up for; these down and back routine checkups don't count. This time they won't even be gone overnight, or so she hopes.

As she stares straight ahead a spider swings down abruptly as a yo-yo, dangles for a moment, then busily begins to ravel up an eight-footed cat's cradle right in front of her face. She bats it to the floor, watches it scurry away under a crumpled milkshake container, then reaches up and swabs away its flimsy barricade. Never mind the house, she thinks; if they were to be killed right now the truth would be out in no time; the car is a travelling dump. There would be smelly sneaker soles, dirty socks and candy wrappers, trampled bubble gum

and melted crayon ends strewn from here to the New Hampshire toll booth. But they're not going to have an accident; even if life is at best a gamble, they've certainly used up their share of disasters for a while. Nevertheless, she makes a silent promise to clean everything up as soon as they get back, puts her head back, shuts her eyes, and tries to sleep.

It's Phil's last day in the hospital; Ristine has promised to discharge him tomorrow. The surgical team has been in twice, once to take out the stitches and once just to admire their handiwork, Dalton, Hunker, Mandelbaum and Greef all standing in a row at the foot of Phil's bed as graduated and inseparable as the fingers of one hand, joking and elbowing each other, still as high as kites over the operation. Mandelbaum the senior resident, as sleek as a penguin with his dark hair, white coat and glasses, has proudly pointed out to Sara that he has not only replaced Phil's belly button good as new, but also made the second scar, although much longer, go off across his ribs at precisely the same angle as the first, so that Phil's abdomen has the symmetry of an uninflated basketball.

Now Ristine is sitting on the bed, as pale and lank as wheat. With his wire-rimmed glasses, pointed nose and mild manner he reminds Sara of a Mr. Peepers somehow stretched tall and competent. He has warmed up considerably over the days of Phil's recovery, which Sara thinks is a good sign. For all his knowledge and appreciation of the body as machine, Phil suspects him of being a secret philosopher; that's how he keeps his cool detachment. Sara has her suspicions about the detachment; she still remembers Ristine sitting there the night before the operation, his long pale hands clasped around one knee, describing to them in his flat Georgia drawl all the awful things that could happen, but that they were ready for. She had remarked finally on how calm and unruffled he seemed, and how reassuring it was to see he was not the least bit worried. He had swivelled his head around, blinked up at her as solemn as a cat and said, "Who me? Hell no, I'm scared to death."

But that is all behind them now, and they are discussing follow-up. "Well," says Ristine, pushing his glasses back up his narrow nose. It's an habitual gesture; watching him now, Sara

wonders how he manages in the operating room. If he does it every three minutes, in eight hours that would be 160 pushes back up his nose. Not such a great number. There are 184 stitches across Phil's belly, all tied by hand. And that's just the outside. The rest of him they've stapled together, ribs and cartilage, muscle and bone. It will look funny on the x-rays, they have told him, like birdshot, but he'll never feel the difference inside.

"About the follow-up," Ristine goes on, "I'll want to see you in six weeks. I don't know what the others have planned." He pauses, looks interrogatively at the two of them, but they don't know either. It's all so complicated, two hospitals, three medical schools, and doctors who come in sets like Chinese boxes, attending, fellow, resident, intern, not to mention the occasional rotating curious medical student, all delighted with their part in unravelling the burden of Phil's mystery. "Somebody we can cure!" Sara remembers overhearing someone whisper excitedly outside Phil's room the night he was admitted to the Institute. Sara was sure they were talking about somebody else, but after all the tests were done—"Now I know what they mean by a battery of tests," Phil said, lying limp and exhausted after the last arteriogram—when Owen Hughes said "We're going for a cure," she started to believe it. So far so good. Owen isn't here right now, having said his goodbyes earlier and flown off to accompany a dying patient back home to India, but they'll be seeing him again; he said he'd keep in touch.

"Right," Ristine says. "We'll fix it up then. Don't do any lifting or twisting until those muscles heal. Expect to feel a little tired when you get home. It doesn't mean a relapse. Just take it easy."

"What else?" Sara asks. She is writing it all down in a notebook they've been keeping ever since Phil left the hospital back home, thinking he was a dead man.

"Well," Ristine drawls, adjusting his glasses, "that's up to the folks across the street. Technically, you belong to them. But my guess is the usual, CAT scan, x-rays, blood, urine every three months, then every six months for a while, then . . ."

"Hold it a minute," Phil says, pulling himself upright. "I

thought you guys said you were going for a cure.” He stares accusingly at Ristine.

Ristine doesn’t even blink. “Right. Nothing’s changed. We’re very hopeful.”

Phil shuts his eyes and sinks back into the pillow. Sara looks at him, afraid for a moment he’s going to cry. Since the operation he has had a tendency to break down easily. Dalton says it’s the let-down; Hunker thinks he’s still a touch anemic. Ristine says it’s normal.

Phil is trembling now, but he doesn’t cry. “So whose idea of a cure is this?”

“It’s standard procedure,” Ristine says mildly. “Just routine. We can’t tell in the lab whether what you had was benign or not, only by hindsight. The tumor you had two years ago seems to have been benign; chances are this one will be too. It’s all academic anyway, because we got it all.”

“Then why can’t you just leave me alone?”

Ristine leans forward. Sara watches his glasses glide slowly down his nose.

“The first couple of checkups are the worst. After you’ve had a few it’ll get better. Two or three years from now you’ll hardly notice. A necessary inconvenience. It won’t bother you a bit.”

Phil has shut his eyes again. As Sara watches him, she sees the years stretch ahead, the checkups—necessary inconveniences—like a series of barricades, and they are in a race, three months, leap up and over, safe on the other side, then back up for the next. The longer you get to run before you have to jump, the closer you are to safety. But as she stares down the road the hurdles just fade off in the distance, infinite, a tunnel full of mirrors.

Ristine unfolds himself from the bed, shakes down his white coat, pushes his glasses back up his nose. “But don’t worry, it won’t be so bad. You’ll get used to it.” He pauses in the doorway, looks thoughtful for a second, then smiles. “Perfect is the enemy of good,” he says, turns and walks away.

Of course she could have stayed home, Sara thinks, and spent her time bulldozing a path through the house instead of riding shotgun when she really isn’t needed. They talked about Phil coming by himself this time, and even though she

didn't really like the idea Sara had pretty much agreed, but as the time got closer Phil seemed to assume she was coming after all. To tell the truth, Sara is relieved. She hates the drive, but not as much as she hates sitting by the phone not knowing. She misses him when he's not around and besides, he might get lost. It's so confusing down here; even with all the driving back and forth she did two years ago, she never seemed to end up on the same road twice.

"There's the sign for Memorial Drive," she says too urgently, and Phil almost veers into a car merging from the left.

"This is crazy," he says through gritted teeth, falling in behind the next car, which speeds away aggressively, the driver waving a rude finger at them and honking contemptuously. There is concrete everywhere, bridges and over- and underpasses, up, and down and all around, with signs the size of restaurant menus posted where you least expect them. Sara remembers the first time they drove down here, in the dark, at rush hour, car headlights shooting off like fireworks every which way. They were both terrified.

"There," she directs with a finger across his line of sight, not trusting herself to distinguish right or left. "That way."

"I see it," Phil says crossly. "I'm all right."

They shoot off the ramp into daylight; overhead the sky looks like the inside of a shucked oyster, and the river gleams mother-of-pearl just beyond the concrete gangways filled with noontime joggers.

"We're almost there," she says. "Keep left," as they whiz onto Beacon Street and head for Brookline. From here there's nothing to it; it's always easier to get there because of all the one-way streets. Sara remembers the first time, after she had left him at the Institute, trying to follow the signs to their friends' house in Cambridge late at night. Suddenly lights seemed to flare at her from all directions, bouncing and weaving and streaming around in arcs as though she had driven into a crowd of runners holding flashlights; so that before she knew it she'd gone right through a red light. The cop who pulled her over shook his head and let her go with just a warning. Still, it's not the thought of getting lost or pulled over that worries her; she wonders what Phil would do, driving back alone, if there happened to be bad news.

But there's really nothing to worry about now, Sara thinks

as she sees the buildings of the Medical Complex loom up, the Institute a great slab of coffee jello rising up among the brick and stone. Good news is good news, and bad news is negotiable. "Who knows what normal looks like in somebody like you?" Owen said cheerfully that day at lunch almost a year ago after all the business with the CAT scan they had done at home "for convenience sake," that looked bad to the local radiologists. After almost two months of phone calls, lost x-rays, misdirected urine samples analyzed in the wrong lab, they had finally had the scan done over in Boston, and to their relief that one showed nothing. It was only a scare, but even so, coming so soon after the operation and almost a year to the day after their local doctor had told them Phil had less than a year to live, it took some getting over. That's probably why they're a little late with this checkup; they just couldn't seem to get up for it. That and the fact that they won't be seeing Owen; he's left the Institute after two tough years—"You were the good news," he told Phil—and lit out for private practice in the territories. So Phil will have another doctor for this checkup, someone he's never met.

Phil pulls in past the entrance to the Clinic and drives up the narrow corkscrew ramp. The machine spits a ticket at him; he passes it to Sara. They finally find a place on the top level. There is a nice view from the top looking north; you can see all of downtown Boston as far up as the docks. To the south the view is cut off by what looks like giant concrete egg crates on end, the new ten-story patient tower of the hospital where Phil had his operation. It has been in use only for six months, and neither of them has been inside, but it's where they're going now.

Sara waits by the car while Phil takes out a crumpled piece of paper on which he has scribbled directions from his friend Bonny in Radiology. "L2, A111, turn right, then left," he reads, then peers skeptically at the paper. "It sounds like the combination to a safe."

They take the elevator down. No matter which button you push, it only goes to one place, the clinic lobby, and opens up directly in front of the security guards' desk. Sara clutches the small red plastic identity visitor's pass card they gave her two years ago. Phil stands erect and nonchalant, his arms folded across his chest. The doors slide open, the guards

glance up indifferently, the doors slide shut. Phil pushes the button for the next floor up and up they go, to the footbridge and series of tunnels that lead to the other buildings.

There is a line down the middle of all the corridors that marks the path, left, right, straight, through the odor of stale egg yolk, formaldehyde and mouse, past crumbling plaster walls stained with damp, down a flight of stairs to where three buildings come together like jagged puzzle pieces, then straight on through increasingly dilapidated corridors past electronic checkpoints whirling and clicking and searching, jostled by people in white coats both coming and going. Sara holds the red plastic card up in front of her just in case, but no one challenges them.

The line stops at a door marked NO ADMITTANCE in rubbed-out letters. Phil yanks the door open and walks through, Sara right behind him. He stops so abruptly she runs right into his back.

"Goodbye yellow brick road," he murmurs in a voice of wonder. "Where the hell are we?" They stand there dumbly like two snags in a stream while the white, green, and blue coats surge up, part company and move around them. The place is full of rattling gurneys, wheelchairs, swaying IV's, people bustling every which way. Far away there is the whine of an electric drill. Then Sara realizes where they are. What used to be the end wall of the old main corridor is now a carpeted lobby full of elevators to the new building. The old building is in the process of renovation; down the hall Sara hears the sound of a jackhammer, and a whiff of burning plaster dust and ozone mingles with the smell of iodine and lunch. All along both sides of the corridor are large garbage bags full of debris; there's an intermittent ragged whine of drills and saws. She peers into one of the old charity wards. It's clearly in the process of being dismantled, wiring and pipes exposed, partitions pulled down into piles of lath and plaster, new lumber everywhere, great sheets of drywall. Some mess, Sara thinks. Fascinated by the demolition, she is still peering curiously down the hallway when she feels Phil nudge her in the direction of the elevators.

Phil pushes a button in the elevator that matches the one on his piece of paper and down they go. They walk down a windowless corridor that is hardly less beat-up looking than

the old; at the far end moving figures can be seen shrouded in polyethylene. There is a crackling sound, and sparks hit the plastic like fireflies in a dirty jar. All along the wall red fire-alarm lights blink and beep faintly, but no one seems to take much notice. The CAT scan office is midway down the hall, marked with a small handlettered sign. The room is smaller than the old one, painted cream, three-quarters full of metal shelves with manila folders spilling every which way. The rest of the small space is waiting room with rows of seats bolted to the floor along the wall. Phil stands in front of the counter; a slight, white-haired woman presses her knees sideways against her seat to give him room.

"Yes?" the young man behind the counter inquires politely. Phil gives his name. The young man bustles through the folders on the counter. "Have you been here before? Ah, yes, I see you have," he says as he pulls out Phil's thick file. He puts it to one side, then fills a paper cup from a large bottle of clear liquid. "Drink three of these. You're tall."

"Cheers," Phil says, taking a big gulp. He shudders, makes a face. "Gyuck," he says.

"I don't see why they can't put an olive in it," the white-haired woman says unexpectedly. "One little olive wouldn't show."

"We just ran out of cranberry juice," the young man says from behind the counter. "Busy day. Sorry."

Phil nods gravely, and fills his cup again. The liquid gives off an odor of stewed band-aids; Sara wrinkles up her nose. Actually it's radioactive iodine and sterile water. Even with cranberry juice Phil says it's awful.

"Where's Bonny?" Phil asks after a moment.

"Lunch," the young man answers. "But she'll be back any minute."

Phil strolls out into the hall, sipping from his paper cup. Not just because he's tall but also because his insides have been so thoroughly rearranged, he not only has to drink three, they discovered after the bad scan last year, but do it while walking around. Sara glances around the new office. The other one was decorated with cat posters and old *New Yorker* covers; this one is all business, framed CAT scan sections on the wall, heads on one side, torsos on the other. Sara

has never seen a actual scan before; she steps up to one wall and looks at the photographs. Even in black and white the skull series resembles something from the deli, olive loaf with macaroni lined up slice by slice. She moves over to the torso series. These pictures are larger, more complex, mottled shapes in black and white and gray, each item clearly labeled with little colored plastic spears. The whole thing reminds her of a catalog page of holiday gift packs, assorted delicacies you send by mail to sundry relatives in lieu of presents. She studies the ghostly slices, trying to make out what's what. These small round pears your kidneys, this bunch of grapes your small intestine, this large smoked pheasant your liver. The deluxe assortment. Phil's comes, she thinks, with only the one pear, the rest peppered with birdshot and a little jumbled up in transit. She shuts her eyes, reflecting that no one should know as much about another person's insides as she does.

She turns away, opens her eyes and walks into the hall, looking for Phil. He is standing at the far end of the hall with Bonny. Bonny is talking animatedly, her ponytail bobbing; Phil is smiling. Sara is about to walk towards them when she hears a loud metallic rending noise behind her. She turns to see two large flat doors sliding open like an elevator. Inside the machine looms like a giant Bendix. Phil has described having a scan as going through a car wash lying down, without the car, except you don't get wet. To Sara it looks like a giant oven.

The attendant steps out, slides the door half-shut behind her. "Mrs. Crane?" The white-haired woman stands up, walks stiffly out into the hall toward Sara, her eyes wide with terror.

"Don't worry. It doesn't hurt," Sara says without thinking. The woman glances at her, smiles weakly, and disappears between the sliding doors.

Phil and Bonny have come back down the hall. "Doesn't he look great?" Bonny says to her as she goes by. Sara follows them into the waiting room.

"Isn't this something?" Bonny says. "A brand-new ten-story building on top of us, and we wind up with this." She dumps a glass of clear liquid into the pot of a wilted azalea, tries to fluff up the leaves while the water gurgles out into the dish.

"I hope that's not what you're giving me," Phil says. "The

damn thing'll glow in the dark." He holds out his cup. "If it lives."

Bonny grimaces, then smiles. "Now there's a thought. I'll take it home and use it for a nightlight." She fills his cup. "That's it. You're next," she says, still smiling. Sara wonders where the young man has gone. Probably to lunch. It's almost noon, after all. She doesn't feel hungry herself at the moment; anyway, she'll wait and eat lunch with Phil when this is over.

Silence falls. They can hear the hum of the machine next door. It whirs louder and louder, gaining speed, and when Sara shuts her eyes she sees the bright stainless steel rim spinning faster and faster, flashing like magician's hoops. The machine hums and hums. She walks down to the ladies' room and back again, stands next to Phil just outside the waiting room door. Out in the hall doors slide back. Someone calls Phil's name. Phil turns his head attentively toward the voice, then looks down at Sara. His face is pale, strained, and mildly apologetic.

"Are you going to go have lunch now?"

Sara shakes her head. "I thought I'd wait for you."

Phil shrugs. "That's up to you. If you want we can get something to eat next door after I'm done; the food's better. I'm starving. But I may be awhile."

"You're always starving," Sara says severely. But she's glad he's hungry, remembering what he looked like after the first operation, like a ragged coat hung on a stick. He doesn't look like that now. He winks at her as she stands there stiffly, staring at him. "See you later."

"See you later," she repeats, steps up to him and gives him a peck on the cheek. "Good luck," she says, as he walks off down the hall, his footsteps sounding in time with the red fire lights as they beep their unregarded warning to the air. Sara watches him disappear, then goes back inside to wait.

There has been considerable discussion whether Sara should wait at the hospital or at Jane and Pete's house in Cambridge until the operation is over, both Ristine and Phil insisting it's unnecessary, even foolish, because there's nothing she can do, and it only increases her chances of getting

mugged. "I don't want to worry about that," Phil says to her the night before. "I've got enough to worry about."

"You worry too much," she answers. "Anyway you'll be asleep." But she is in fact thinking of not coming until Owen, stepping outside with her as she's about to leave, says "If I were you, I'd be there."

So she has been waiting here all this long day, and is here now, standing in the long narrow corridor outside the door that leads to the operating room and to Intensive Care upstairs. Her head aches slightly, probably because she forgot to eat lunch, but she can do that later. She has been here so long that she feels invisible; no one seems to notice her standing against the wall of the main corridor as they go by and in and out, the doors whooshing and thumping constantly; she could be on another plane of existence, even in another country. Still, the worst is over; Phil hasn't died, and she has not been mugged.

The door next to her bangs back and Owen Hughes comes out, his white coat undone, his stethoscope dangling precariously from the top pocket. His face is rosy, cheerful, glistening with perspiration. He catches sight of her and comes over to her, smiling. "He's doing fine," he says, folding his arms. "Still out cold, though."

She knows that he is doing fine; she saw Ristine in the hall earlier so she knows from him it's gone well, the best that they could hope for. They did not have to take out the kidney after all, only a small part was damaged, and Ristine's sure they got it all. Still, it is nice to hear it from Owen. She heaves a great sigh that leaves her head throbbing, and both she and Owen stand there mopping their brows for a while longer, while Owen tells her all about it, how brilliant Ristine was, how people clapped and cheered like onlookers at a major league game.

"It's such a miracle," Sara blurts out, feeling like an idiot, realizing how naive, even ungrateful that sounds, adds quickly: "It seems like such a miracle to us anyway. But you must be used to it; around here it must happen all the time."

"As a matter of fact it doesn't," Owen says. "But that's what keeps us poor bastards going, the chance of the odd miracle."

As she stares at him incredulous, he smiles and throws an

arm around her numb shoulders, hugs her briefly. "I've got to go now. But I'll be back later. See you." And off he goes down the hall, his white coat flapping. Ah, the miracle, she thinks, testing the unfamiliar, even religious word, the odd pale miracle, as stern and still and fugitive as grace.

Later, after Ristine has found her still standing in the hall and taken her upstairs, even though he has told her Phil won't be awake, not for hours yet, and even though he has told her he's still hooked up to everything, Sara is so relieved and excited that she insists, and so she follows Ristine upstairs as hollow-sounding as the inside of an empty bus, so she can see for herself that it is really over, that Phil is fine, and everything went well. There is some compensation in having been through all this before, she reflects as she passes the nurses' station in the center of the unit; she won't be horrified by all the tubes and wires and machines and other paraphernalia.

But there is one thing she has not seen before, the respirator hose rammed down his throat like a big vacuum cleaner hose, and as she stares at him, she sees his throat working against it, feels her own throat gag. Ristine is standing next to her in his street clothes—he's not worried or he'd still be in his greens—looking pleased, his head bobbing up and down like one of those goggle-eyed long-beaked trick birds perched on a glass of water.

Sara walks forward and slips her fingers into Phil's partly curled-up hand. There is no response, but the hand is warm and rosy, not at all the way it was before. In fact, all of Phil is pink and rosy, at least what she can see of him. Not like the other time at all when he lay there for days as pale as chalk, barely alive, his flesh wound around his bones as frail as smoke.

"He's still under," Ristine says from behind her. "That's why he's on the respirator. The anesthesia paralyzes the breathing mechanism."

Sara nods, then to give herself something to do since she can't hold his hand, she walks around, trying not to trip over things, and studies the machines and dials and meters. The respirator chuffs and sighs, the IV drips, the heart monitor bleeps a reasonable pulse of 98. Blood pressure ticks out 130/80, very good. She remembers the other time, the heart

monitor line as furred as tinsel, the frenzied bleep almost continuous, the blood pressure so low they couldn't get a vein to run the transfusions. She looks around to see how many bags of blood he's getting, sees none, only an IV full of clear liquid. The nurse stands back, following her with her eyes. Sara starts back around the bed, carefully avoiding Phil's bare feet hanging over the end, turns to take one last look at him before she leaves, and to her absolute horror sees his whole body seem to contract and shudder convulsively once, twice, the respirator hose writhing across him like a snake, the line of the heart monitor bursting into a froth of tinsel. Oh, shit, it's happening, she thinks, right here, right now, it's happening. Why did I ever mention miracles? "Oh my God, what's wrong?" she practically screams, then claps a hand over her mouth and stares, appalled.

"He's shivering," Ristine says calmly, standing there with his arms folded.

She stares in disbelief. "But why?"

"Because he's cold," Ristine answers in his level drawl.

Sara shuts her eyes and in the whirling rush of silence, knowing that he is still safe after all, she laughs.

Phil gives his name to the receptionist behind the desk in the waiting room of the Clinic. Meanwhile Sara sits down in one of the nearby row of chairs, picks up a magazine and begins to leaf through it. A nurse calls Phil's name, and he walks over to the nurse's station. After a moment, Sara gets up and walks around to where Phil is sitting with a thermometer in his mouth while the nurse pumps up the blood pressure cuff. Phil looks up at her, watching her face while Sara watches the mercury bouncing in the blood pressure tube on the wall. She learned to do blood pressure two years ago after they discovered the second tumor had driven Phil's upwards of 250/160, high enough to kill him if he sneezed. She still keeps tabs on it at home, just in case. "It's fine," Sara says.

The nurse nods, glancing at her curiously. "120 over 70," she tells them. "Nothing wrong with that."

Phil stands up, hands her the thermometer, and steps onto the scale. The arrow lurches around to two hundred and three pounds. Phil shrugs. "I had a big lunch," he tells the nurse.

"That's what they all say," she says dryly. "You can go sit down now."

Sara smiles, feeling proud of Phil as if he were her baby, gaining and thriving. They are about to sit down again when someone calls his name, a tall, thin, sandy-haired doctor with a scraggly beard and hornrimmed glasses. The doctor looks very young, almost apologetic, certainly shy. Holding Phil's chart in one hand, he extends the other. "Hello. I'm Dr. Nevins."

They shake hands briefly then the doctor goes down the hall. "See you later," Phil says over his shoulder to Sara as he follows Nevins down the hall.

"Oh, your wife is welcome to come along," Nevins says, and waits for Sara to catch up. They all file together into an empty examining room, sit down, and cross their legs simultaneously to get comfortable. Nevins flips open Phil's chart, stares at it briefly then closes it, laces his fingers across his knee and looks up.

"Well now. Tell me what's been going on since you were here last."

"Nothing really," Phil begins. He goes on to recite the medications, his diet, the precautions he's been taking, emphasizing that he feels just fine. It all sounds so normal, and Sara remembers the two hot meatball sandwiches he wolfed down at lunch. As he leans back in his chair, his jacket falls away, and the two long scars stand out momentarily as ridges under his turtleneck. Watching him, Sara thinks about the CAT scan. They told them some time after three; it's now two-thirty. Sara feels the news pressing closer with the flat inevitability of a letter mailed but not yet delivered; it's all down in black and white now, fixed and irrevocable, good news or bad.

Nevins opens up the chart again, leafs through the various reports, blood tests, x-rays, urine tests, back at least an inch. When he begins to talk it's nothing new, nothing they haven't heard before, but coming from him it sounds different, even alarming. He knows something awful, Sara thinks, and then thinks, no, he can't. It's simply that he has no gift, not like Owen; she can tell already that for him there are no odd miracles, only triumphs of technology. He even makes her feel like a patient, as she listens to him talking about genetic predisposition, increased likelihood, unsettled pathology. Then

he shuts the folder, clasps his hands over it with a gesture of finality, and clears his throat. "So I think it would be advisable to continue these checkups for at least another year."

Slowly Phil turns his head toward her, stares at her stone-faced, as if to say, "What did I tell you?" Then he turns back to Nevins. "Dr. Hughes said after two years it could be once a year."

"Six months is better," Nevins persists. "Just to be on the safe side. There's a great deal we don't know about your tumor; they're extremely rare, as I'm sure Dr. Hughes told you. This way we can catch anything that might come up early, while there's still something we can do."

Staring at Nevins, Sara sees the horizon of security recede a little further. Nevins shifts in his seat, then smiles.

"Though I must say, seeing you looking so well is most encouraging. If you get through a few more of these, you should be an excellent candidate for long-term survival." He stands up briskly, and their eyes follow him in tandem. "Now if you'd like to get undressed, we can do the physical exam. Then I'll call about your CAT scan." He nods to Sara, nods to Phil, goes out and shuts the door behind him.

Phil stands up, begins to pace around the room. Several narrow shiny instruments Sara hopes are designed merely to look up ears or noses rattle and clank on the steel cart as he brushes by; nearby a glass jar full of cotton swabs rocks precariously. He whirls around and glares at her. "Do you believe this? Did you hear that bullshit about long-term survival?" he says. "Formerly known as life, in case you hadn't guessed." He rolls his eyes toward the ceiling. "God, I wish Owen were still here."

"Doctors are different," she says as calmly as she can, studying her hands. "He's just being cautious."

"Right," Phil snorts. He stomps around a few more steps, then grabs his jacket by the lapels and jerks it off, throws it over the chair. He looks down at her. "See you later," he says pointedly.

"Don't you want me to stay?"

"Of course not. What for?" Phil says as he undoes his belt, drags his shirt out of his pants.

"I want to stay with you. I want to be here," she insists, aware of a vague compulsion; if it's going to be bad news it's better shared.

Phil bends down to untie his shoes. "Thanks anyway, but I'll be all right," he says. "You wait outside, okay?"

She opens the door just as Nevins is about to knock. After a brief feint and parry Sara steps out into the hall, and Nevins steps in. As she looks back over her shoulder, she sees Nevins peering through the crack. "So nice to have met you," he says, and shuts the door.

She wanders away from the doorway, down the corridor toward the waiting area in the lobby. With its soft, indirect lighting, its comfy overstuffed Design Research lounges and Marimekko drapes, its indoor/outdoor carpet strewn with toys and books and coats and spilled crayons, coloring books and candy wrappers, a rapidly browning apple core set in an otherwise unused ashtray, it looks like someone's living room, everything left casually waiting for the owners to come back and pick up where they left off.

But Sara doesn't feel like sitting down, much less picking up, so she walks over to the big bulletin board in the middle of the hall between the adult and children's sections. It's a big cheerful, busy-looking bulletin board, full of miscellaneous announcements and things to read, all tacked up any which way like bulletin boards everywhere. Its casual disorder—stuff scattered at different angles, plastered over in layers—reminds her of her own house, and for a moment she feels right at home. She starts at the top and reads across. "What to do in Boston": a list of places to go and see; "Have you been to the Top of the Rock? Ask for our hotel brochures, special discounts for patients and their families. Find out today!"; a mint-green mimeographed sheet announces the most recent interest rate for the Clinic Credit Union. "Open your IRA today. Invest in the future! Time accounts available, up to 2 years. Patients welcome."

Sara stares at the words for a moment. Her eyes wander to a schedule of lectures for the week. "The Use of Immuno-factor D in recurrence of renal-cell carcinoma after a remission of 18 years." She skips down the rest of the list, to a brightly colored travel brochure—sparkling water, sandy beaches, striped awnings and palm trees. A mostly naked, very tan man and woman, blond hair streaming, scoot down a bleached path in a candy-colored golf cart, laughing hysterically. "Beat the Boston winter blahs! Barbados in Spring!

Think of it! Special group rates for patients and their families!”

As Sara stands there obediently thinking of it, a small figure comes barreling out of the children’s area and bangs right into her leg. He looks up startled, his face screwed up into a blotchy mask of outraged indignation. Then he takes off again, paper diapers swishing, tottering down the hall as fast as his legs will carry him. Even from here, Sara can see the few sparse hairs on his round bald head, the yellowed waxen complexion. Then a harassed-looking woman pushes past, excusing herself, and races after the bald baby, calling “Larry! Larry!” The child doesn’t get far before he’s stopped by a blue-coated security guard. He arches his back, lets out a howl and pushes away, but the guard holds him until his mother hauls him up and hoists him over her shoulder. “Now, Larry,” she murmurs as they come back down the hall. “Be a big boy. It’s not so bad. It’ll all be over before you know it.” The little boy struggles feebly, kicking small hard shoes against his mother’s hip until she reaches down and holds his feet. He drops his head on her shoulder, pops his thumb into his mouth, whimpering as they nudge past Sara in the direction of the Infusion Room.

Sara stares after them, remembering what Phil said the first time they came back here. “You know, it’s not the place so much or even that I have to be here that really bugs me. It’s all the little bald babies running around.” And as she stands there the whole place seems to turn dark, as though light can no longer penetrate the layers of smoked glass, and what there is seeps into the roughened concrete walls like paint, leaving long barred shadows all along the walls, and she wants to take a hammer and run through the place, battering and flailing it all down, the flashy Mexican wallhangs, the sky-high murals, the burbling fish tanks, the chipper carpets and dutiful chairs, the flushed or unflushed toilets, apple cores, anything and everything, smash it all down and trip off lightly through the debris, and not come back.

But it’s all hopeless, she thinks as she sinks down on one of the butcher block sofas. She’d know this clutter anywhere, these flimsy fragments shored against the ruins, and she of all people should know what it’s for. Behind the wallhangs and murals are concrete walls as blank and pitiless as stone;

under the carpet littered with coats and toys and games and babies' pacifiers the surface is thin, dark, and translucent, and beneath it is the cold chalk face of death.

She sits on the butcher block sofa, trying to pull herself together, and suddenly she is visited with the sharp physical longing to go back, go back before any of this, before even the possibility of this, to when her own children were small enough to hold all at once, their little starfish hands clutching at her, back to the time when life seemed so simple and so safe. Go back, go back, the voice says, and for a moment she doesn't know who she's supposed to be, wife, mother, daughter, so oddly does the past lie not just on the present and the future, but the past as well, that for this moment she seems to be staring forever past the rims of many mirrors reflecting one another back and forth, transfixed by these long corridors full of time, and she sees her father, new suitcase in hand, slinging his jacket over his shoulder, kissing her good-bye, and disappearing down the tunnel full of mirrors. Come back, she calls after him, but it is too late, and he is gone.

She looks up. Someone is coming toward her down the hall, holding his jacket. Why, he's here, she thinks, momentarily confused. He's back. But as he comes closer she sees Phil's face, grim, preoccupied. Oh, no, she thinks. It's bad. Then he catches sight of her and smiles. Ah, she thinks, it's good. But as he walks up to her he shakes his head.

"They haven't read it yet. Nevins called twice. We're supposed to call him back after six. And not only that," he says, fluttering a piece of paper under her nose, "I've got to have a chest x-ray. Well now," he mimics Nevins' soft nasal voice, "'There is that spot on your rib we'd like to keep track of.' What did I tell you? I'm a goddamned research project." He tosses her his jacket. "I'll be right back," he says over his shoulder as he disappears down the spiral concrete stairs to x-ray.

How can he do this? Sara wonders as she leans wearily against the stair rail. How can anybody? Just then she hears behind her the rapid thump of feet, the high-pitched gurgling sound. Oh no, she thinks, not again. She turns and sees the small bald child running toward her. His short legs churn, his hands reach forward, grasping at the air as if it would support him if he fell. Sara takes a step forward to

catch him but he goes right by her, still gurgling, and abruptly Sara realizes he is laughing. His face is merry, his mouth stretched into a wide gummy grin in which eight hard teeth glisten whitely. He rushes past her and throws his arms around the security guard's knees, tilts his head back and hugs her.

"Bye, Larry," the guard says cheerfully. "You're a good boy. See you next week."

Larry nods. "Week," he repeats, then looks around for his mother. She has come up behind him, and now she quickly bundles him into his coat, shrugs hers on, and takes his hand. "Thanks," she says to the guard with a weary smile. "See you next week."

Sara watches them as they spin around through the revolving doors and out onto the snowy street. Then she turns back and leans once more against the concrete stairwell, elbows resting on Phil's coat. It has been a long day. It's getting late; most of the patients and their families have picked up their belongings and gone. But she's still here and Phil is just downstairs; he'll be back any minute, a chest x-ray is nothing, a minor inconvenience. It is so quiet now she can hear the hum of the air circulators, the faint clank of the elevators moving up and down. She feels the day collapse around her like an enormous multicolored parachute, settling gently over her in silken muffling folds, and lulled by the calm banality of bulletin boards, of time accounts and group rates and Barbados in the spring, of comic books and textbooks and all the assorted random trash of daily life, almost imperceptibly she feels her fear subside, soften once again into a familiar well-worn garment, pockets full of wadded string and paper clips, grit and rubberbands, loose change and sticky messages scrawled by the children, crumpled kleenex and loose pen tops. We can do this, she thinks as she catches sight of Phil at the bottom of the stairs. It's not so bad. Perfect is the enemy of good, she thinks as she watches him come stomping up the stairs from x-ray. See you next week, next year, up and over, almost done. It's not so bad, she thinks, handing him his coat, as long as you keep on moving.

"Come on, let's get out of here," Phil says as he grabs her arm and heads toward the elevator. "We can always call from home."

Back home Sara watches from the doorway while Phil punches out the number of the Clinic. "Dr. Nevins, please." The pause stretches thin and taut along the wire.

"Hello, Dr. Nevins, Phil. Right." He listens, face impassive, nods, then shakes his head while the phone chirps like a cricket in his ear. He frowns, looks mildly perplexed. She shuts her eyes, doesn't open them again until she hears the sound of the phone being hung up.

Phil stands up, throws his arms out, begins to stretch. She watches the two long scars pull taut under his shirt.

" 'The chest x-ray was fine, and your CAT scan looks just great,' " he repeats verbatim, his voice squeezed oddly thin and breathless by his stretch. " 'See you in six months if nothing else comes up.' " Then he relaxes forward, regards her impassively, and shrugs. "That's it. It's over."

Sara walks across the room, puts her arms around him, rests her head against his chest, hears the gentle rocking of his heart, the slow smooth sift of breathing, feels the warm resilience of his skin beneath his clothes. As she stands there with her arms around him, her face pressed hard against his chest, she feels the scars as thick as ropes between them, and as clearly as if it were this moment remembers the night five years ago, just before the first operation, after his doctor had let him out on patient's furlough so he could spend the whole day with her and the kids, a day in April, a sunny day, a windy day, a day for flying kites, coming back late to his hospital room as though it were a hotel, just the two of them, remembers standing in the doorway watching him as he unbuttons his shirt, slowly pulls it off, holds it out at arm's length, then turns to face her, saying, "Take a good look at me now, because I'm never going to be the same."

She remembers moving toward him, slipping her arms around him, hears her own voice saying calmly, spinning the bright disc of her innocence against the fear: "So who is? Just get through tomorrow and that will be the end of it," sees his face as he looks down at her, eyes fixed and intent as a runner's and says: "Or the beginning"; knows now, years later, even in this other place, that it will never be over, safety is an illusion, and it will always be too soon.

ROBERT McDOWELL

Quiet Money

for Randy & Carole McDowell

The bootlegger opens his eyes and stares
Down the grey runway, another Wednesday.
Boney, shivering in early bathroom weather,
He locates a glass of rye on the window ledge
And flicks on the light. Flight day.
The weather report on the wireless is good,
Though what he sees in his shaving mirror
Makes him think of mechanical foul-ups—
A slice of wing shooting past him,
Chips of propeller smacking his goggles.

Flicking his thumb across the straight razor
Joe tells himself it's good to feel the edge,
To remember it's only a membrane
That separates blood from the body intact.
He thinks of landing an office job and laughs.
He thinks of coffee in a field cup and he's warm.
Down in the alley two cats howl,
The soundtrack of a skirmish. A trashcan topples.
"That's motivating music," he says,
And mutters the closing bars of "Over There"—

we won't come back until it's over over there . . .

*

Mirabelle sulks in a luncheonette on Fourth,
Daubing her nose with a hankie, stirring eggs.
She wants him. She wants him everywhere.
On the bus to work she thought of telling him
"Give it up or stop coming around,"

But the words were too heavy to carry,
Like too much weight in her handbag
Throwing off her natural stride.

Now she laughs
At the thing she'd tried last night,
Pouring so many martinis, hoping he'd nosedive
Into sleep and miss this day.
But Joe can hold his liquor
And he'd chattered all night about poets and the war.
Later, filing claims at the office,
Mirabelle can't fix on the hour she passed out,
Or the hour he pinned the note to her pillow:

*See you Monday, Doll.
With something pretty from Oslo!*

*

The airstrip flags point east at a quarter to five.
Joe rubs a compass in his flight jacket pocket,
His fingers brushing the pages of Rupert Brooke,
And he's thinking of wings.
Not those of machines but of birds,
What he'd wanted as a child
Who had loved the bird's life of excess
And dramatic death down a chimney
Or in the talons of a larger bird.
Walking round the plane he whistles

The Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming . . .

"Nobody knows," he says, "but some Norwegian 3,600 miles away.
'Nobody crosses The Pond alone,' the experts say.
Well, I won't be rubbing their noses in it,
Though there's plenty gearing up to do just that.
Circus flyboy stuff. There's money in it,
But fame comes, too, a suit you can't take off."

He lingers, checking the Wright Whirlwind engine.
The tailwind says *look out*;

His patience says *take off*.
 Far to the north the lights of Jersey sparkle,
 Calming down.

Over there, over there . . .

He scrambles up on the wing, his perch,
 One step from home. The cockpit
 Makes him think of the backyards of boyhood.
 Clearing the trees at the field's far edge
 Joe banks to the left, circling a hill,
 And levels out heading northeast.
 He likes that initial turn, getting the feel of it,
 Feeling the earthbound tug slip away.

He imagines gunning for stars,
 But the stars are at peace, in collusion.
 The sun balloons above the waterline;
 The moon drops down to the sea.
 Joe thinks of the money he's flying,
 Of gin crates stacked in a hanger in Norway.
 He thinks of a present for Mirabelle,
 Of the life he's making, up here, among prosperous currents.

*

She doesn't want to think of him all day,
 But superstition bites. She takes off,
 Daydreaming herself into flight beside him.
 "Joe," she thinks, "the only thing I want is a home
 With you on the sofa, drinking a soda."
 After five, plodding home, her head
 Keeps lifting toward a drone that isn't there.
 "Monday isn't far," she tells herself.

*

Joe's gruff Norwegian contact waves
 As he lifts off, climbing in the wind
 That will take him back to the luncheonette.

He climbs with the current inside him,
The current Mirabelle loves him for and fears.

Twelve hours out, twenty from home,
He fights it,
The drone of the motor stirring sleep.
He regrets staying up last night until two
Singing war songs, talking baseball
And drunk Norwegian poets and women—always women.
Joe nods behind his controls,
But something besides sleep isn't right.
Something in the sky is wrong.

He comes to long enough to focus
On a silvery image below him, skimming the sea.
Bird, then *dolphin*, occur to him. The *plane*.
That can't be, so he tells himself *reflection*
And conjures the creature from an old story
That snatches plane and pilot
If they fly too close to water.
"That can't be anyone but me," he says.
The image below him fades, heading the other way.
That's wrong. So he cups his hand outside
To catch a breeze and deflect it into his face,
But sleep blows through him, too.

Now he's hunting for the brainstorm gadget he'd installed
Under his seat. He finds it, grazes the live wire
With his wrist and sits up, back to himself.
And alone—as it should be.
Below him nothing angles but the sea.
Hitting fog he pulls back on the throttle
(Like flying inside a glass of milk)

say a prayer, say a prayer . . .

Until he hits clear air at 4,500 feet.
He thinks of Mirabelle asleep
And of Brown and Alcock
Teaming up for the first crossing in 1919.

He thinks of them losing their bearings in fog,
 Flying upside down within 500 feet of the sea.
 How many times did Brown crawl out on the wing,
 Wiping snow and sleet from the fuel gauge? Joe smiles.
 "Those clowns made good, all right, but what for?
 10,000 pounds, knighthood,
 And Alcock dead in a crack-up six months later."

Goodnight, Irene, goodnight . . .

Joe tips his wing to Alcock
 And levels out over the coast of Newfoundland.

*

Sweeping cups from the counter into a tray,
 Madge winks as Joe saunters past the register.
 Mirabelle, raising a fork, freezes,
 Riding out a tremor, and a wedge
 Of lemon meringue free-falls to her lap.
 "You can't have this and wear your food," he says.
 One hand rests on her shoulder;
 The other sets a hatbox on the table.
 Tapping the left side of his jacket
 He lowers his voice: "Tonight," he says,
 "I'll show you what I got in here."
 Mirabelle's face is like clearing weather
 As she preens herself in the mirror,
 Admires the way she looks in a smart Norwegian bonnet.
 "Maybe in that hat you'll see things other ways," Joe says.
 Mirabelle sits down.
 Joe fidgets with a cup.
 "You don't look well," she says. "What's up?"

"I pushed it to the limit on this run.
 I let myself stay up all hours
 And then I couldn't hold it off—
 The Sandbag Eye—I saw things.
 I saw the creature from that story you hate;

I saw myself as a child, grounded in a strange neighborhood.
 I saw another plane, Belle. A reflection, I guess,
 But that's what shook me most. Listen,
 I got a bonus for the quick turn-around.
 It's more than we've ever seen.
 Why don't we get hitched?
 Just don't make me give it all up."

"I know," she says,
 And hammers one hard kiss across his chapped lips.

On the street Joe feels the slap of a newsboy's cry:

Lindbergh Lands In Paris

He whistles like a punctured tire.
 Mirabelle hugs his arm and nods.
 "I didn't want to bring it up," she says.
 Joe leans against a lamppost, staring east.

"Lindbergh.
 I never thought he'd beat them,
 Byrd and the others with all their cash.
 I knew he was in the hunt, in a quiet way,
 But I never figured this.
 I guess I thought he was too much like me.
 He'll get the tickertape parades and medals,
 Money and keys to the mayor's w.c.
 Think of it, honey. All that brotherly love."

On the landing, at the door to her walk-up,
 Mirabelle fumbles in her purse for keys.
 "Lindbergh's never landed *here*," Joe says.
 Inside he pulls a bottle from his duffel bag.

"Sometimes a proud man
 Doesn't wave himself around.
 Headlines cut the pants off privacy.
 They make you public, a pioneer.
 I wonder if he knows what he's in for?"

Joe talks and talks.
 The moon pins a spotlight on his face.
 Mirabelle wrings her hands and rocks,
 The bottle open on the bureau-top,
 But neither takes a drink.

*

Past three. Joe is flying blind, questioning.
 Mirabelle's breathing is a motor in good repair.

Over there, over there . . .

Joe hums under his partner's sleep.
 "What?" she says, banking out of a dream.
 "I'm thinking of getting a house in Jersey," he says,
 But he's thinking of Lindbergh, too.
 He's thinking of a plane below him,
 Skimming the rooftops of Paris, beating him out.
 "Anywhere," Mirabelle says. "Anything you want."

What *does* he want?

Nearing five Joe looks down on his body in a restless sleep.
 Sprawling so he looks a little like Italy on a globe.
 Out of the body a body looks that way,
 A smear of papier-maché, a flare-up,
 An ugly reminder on a fist of blue.
 Joe, or Joe's double, wonders
 If the quiet atmosphere he flew in was a cheat.
 Mirabelle, asleep, looks like a separate country.
 How can she make him believe in home?
 In peace? Can anyone? Undertakers, maybe—
 White-jacketed illusionists keeping a low profile.
 Why does Joe's double escape so many nights?
 Why, when he returns, does he keep
 What he's found to himself,
 A country inside a country, unmapped?
 The questions hound Joe out of sleep,
 So wrapping himself in a blanket
 He gropes his way into a chair

And flicks on a reading lamp.
 Slowly the room settles, focuses,
 And he picks up a copy of *Lear*
 To whisper the Fool's lines, his favorites.
 Their sound, the way it makes him feel,
 Is enough. He rides it into the afternoon.

*

On moving day they look like a couple
 In a paperweight, their arms around each other.
 Joe is Errol Flynn in a flight jacket;
 Mirabelle's lucky hair falls down like rain.

After the movers back over the curb
 And putter north, the newlyweds
 Climb the fire escape for a farewell drink.
 "What are you thinking?" she asks.

"Nothing. Just noticing the wind,
 How it's turning nasty, how I wouldn't wait."
 The winner in the paperweight dissolves;
 A hard and lonely figure takes his place.

"Joe, how long before you face it,
 Before you get it straight, what it means to you?"
 "What are you talking about?"
 "Not what," she says. "Who."

Joe faces her. "Don't push," he says,
 And suddenly he sees himself as memory,
 His image fraying like tapestry.
 "I hope you can take it," he says. "Your man's obscurity."

*

"Something Willy said just ticked Joe off,"
 Mirabelle tells her neighbor in the backyard.
 The iron fence between them soaks up heat.
 "I don't know what."

"I do," her neighbor says. "Willy was carrying on
 About the Yankees and the Babe.
 You know how men get hot when they talk sports.
 Well, Joe allowed how there were players in the Bush Leagues
 Who were just as good as Ruth but never got the breaks.
 Willy wasn't buying, and soon they were toe-to-toe.
 Their faces got red.
 The veins in Joe's neck popped out.
 I noticed that just before he did it—
 Threw his glass (I swear it nicked Willy's ear) in the pool."

"That's when I came back out," Mirabelle says.
 "I saw Willy's eyes get big like balloons
 And Joe just turning, walking away.
 He passed right by me and didn't speak,
 Though I could feel anger breathing out of him.
 It goes back further than the Yanks or the Babe."

A drone out of the west breaks in
 And both look up
 As Mirabelle's single engine flyboy tips his wing.
 Anna gurgles in her playpen.
 Chug, their terrier, snoozes on a plank of sunlight.
 The plane levels out, descending
 Toward the airstrip a couple of miles away.
 Mirabelle holds her breath. *Irrational*,
 She tells herself, but she can't help it.
 Only when he turns their Silver Ghost
 Up the drive will the moment be enough,
 His coming back in one piece
 To lift Anna off his knee
 And catch her as she parachutes back.

*

"I had a case of the yips for years," Joe says.
 His nephew sips lemonade and nods,
 Not knowing what Joe means. He lets him talk.

"After we got hitched
 The weather always indicated *stay*.
 So I'd scrub a couple of flights a month,
 Then two a week, and pretty soon
 I was on the ground more hours
 Than I was logging in my plane.
 Imagine what that did to me!
 You never feel the same once you get out
 From under weather and know it topside.
 You miss the motion, the nerve-and-bone collision.

How many nights did I rock in my chair,
 Spending in my head the cash I'd make
 As soon as I got home safe? And *safe*—
 That word would take me like a haunting
 As I'd fall back knowing where I was.
 I had it, yes. The Yank dream,
 No rain, no sleet, no public pilot
 Cutting his silver trail under me,
 No flight I couldn't roundtrip in a day.
 When I couldn't sleep I'd rock.
 I don't know how I put her through
 Those shifting moods, but Mirabelle was great.
 She'd touch me—stop me, really—
 'Level out,' she'd murmur,
 But if she strayed too long I'd veer off course.
 My throttle hand squeezed nothing,
 Making fingernail imprints on its palm.

It got to where I had to face it,
 The need for something to run up against,
 A glass door, a garage wall,
 An impassive, staring face on the front page.
 Anna helped, and the dog, and this place,
 But I needed more. I got it, too.
 It's sad when I think of it.

You're probably too young to recall
 The scene I'm thinking of. It was March of '32.
 The Lindberghs had a house not far from here

Outside of Hopewell—ironic name!
 The papers served up their grief with our daily bread.
 We memorized photos of ladders
 And footprints in the mud,
 A ransom note on the windowsill.
 The baby, as near as we could tell,
 Was stuffed, still sleeping, in a burlap bag.
 ‘It looks like the work of pros,’ the cops said,
 Which was good for the kid’s sake.

And then the waiting. Ten weeks of dying,
 Ten weeks of cranks and comforters,
 Wheels (the cops called the crazies *wheels*) and volunteers.
 I flew some for the cops, you know,
 Shooting down false leads. It made me sick
 Each time I landed with nothing to offer Lindbergh
 But a negative shake of my head.
 The look on his face will never leave me—
 A mid-Atlantic look, your plane out of fuel.
 The clocks ground on but didn’t move;
 Mail buried their house like lava.
 And all for nothing. Cruelty.
 The body turned up in the woods
 A few miles away—and this is the awful part—
 He’d been dead since that first night.
 The ladder-man had dropped the burlap sack
 And the baby’s head struck a window ledge.
 Imagine how the ‘napper must have felt!

And Lindbergh. How far out,
 In after-years, did he push himself to feel secure?
 And the rest of us . . . how many couldn’t sleep
 For fear of waking without sons and daughters?
 We learned to love the sounds of words
 That covered us—words like *lock* and *alarm*,
 And we raised you on them.
 Now you can’t look strangers in the eye,
 And there may be things you can’t even tell your closest
 friend.

Son, you have to lose to win.
That notion settled in with us
And we passed it on to you.
Thank God. You know what it meant to me?
My daughter safe, first of all,
And all of it, really.
I spent so many nights in her room
Just watching her sleep,
Convincing myself no gang would take her
From me—ex-flyboy, average businessman—
And suddenly I was happy.
My life's course felt fair.
I thought of fame and money, and still do,
How what we do to get them can make us sorry . . .

Send the word, send the word to beware."

MARVIN MUDRICK

The Age of Innocents

This compilation of taped interviews about the Second World War¹ is repetitious, long-winded, often bromidic and borrowed—"He pulled out his .45 and shot him right between the eyes"; "I was afraid so much . . . that I got tired of being scared"—and bleak and bloody and bold (where men were men and women were nurses), very often self-conscious and self-serving (interviewer or interviewed or both), very likely unreliably edited (since it seldom documents anything remote from Studs Terkel's posterlike ideological warp, and since the editing process remains his little secret). "I was in combat for six weeks, forty-two days. I remember every hour, every minute, every incident of the whole forty-two days. What was it—forty years ago?" Well, actually, at the moment when you're remembering, it wasn't *quite* forty years ago, it was more like thirty-eight; and how sharp did you say your memory was? But it's a big book, and a great deal of it is uncluttered, unsentimentally nostalgic, accurately evocative; a useful record of an innocent time. All the voices agree, all the American voices anyhow, that "World War II was just an innocent time in America," says a woman who as a seventeen-year-old in June 1945 in San Francisco ushered as though at the Second Coming—"so deeply proud"—at the inaugural session of the United Nations: "I was innocent. My parents were innocent. The country was innocent." She confesses that "I even liked Bob Hope."

The book too is innocent, belatedly and anachronistically. Unreconstructed New Dealer Terkel gives the impression he's still expecting the next Steinbeck novel or inspirational Corwin broadcast to send the tired blood racing through his veins, because this is the main chance, because the war he me-

¹ THE GOOD WAR¹: AN ORAL HISTORY OF WORLD WAR TWO, by Studs Terkel. Pantheon. \$19.95.

morializes looked to almost everybody at the time and still in retrospect looks to Terkel like the redemptive darkness before the populist dawn, President Roosevelt hasn't gone and died on us and all's about to be made right, this is the war that won't let us down. "It ended," he remembers in his Introduction, "on a note of hope without historic precedent. *On a Note of Triumph* is what Norman Corwin called his eloquent radio program heard coast-to-coast on V-E Day, May 8, 1945. *Lord God of test-tube and blueprint / Who jointed molecules of dust and shook them till their name was Adam, / Who taught worms and stars how they could live together . . .*": nothing so unspeakable would these days get farther than a freshman anthology, but Terkel himself survives to remind us unwittingly that once in America there were the witless who could mock up and mouth such stuff and the hapless whose cockles could be warmed by it as if by Mozart and neither of them of the slightest social significance. America the barely beautiful: the first ever world power undistracted by a class system or by a classy high culture that the ruling class owns and can bludgeon the masses with as incontestable evidence of its right to rule. (Guileless Franz Schubert produced his quota of high culture for the future benefit of commandants of Nazi extermination camps who, back home in the cool of eventide among the wife and kiddies after fulfilling their daily death quota, played and sang him with proprietary self-satisfaction to refresh themselves from the inexhaustible springs of German culture; but don't blame Schubert for the Germans; he had a question he used to ask about anybody new he was going to meet, not "What's he bad at?" but—"*Kenn er was?*"—"What's he good at?" The creators, not the proprietors, of high culture have a pristine curiosity that can be designated anachronistically and chauvinistically as American.)

"Wild Bill" Donovan (1883-1959) is one of the war's forgotten Americans (though not by the men he commanded—"We still keep in touch," says Anthony Scario. "We have a corny name: Donovan's Devils. . . . We talk about how we won the war all by ourselves"). Donovan was a Wall Street lawyer who served as Roosevelt's agent with British intelligence till the U.S. entered the war, when he founded and ran the Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA:

Donovan was on the plane with me from Naples to Algiers [says Irving Goff, veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, here in 1943-45 fighting behind the lines with Italian Communist partisans against the Germans]. He sits down next to me. He's talking about my connection with the Communist Party. Not antagonistic, just curious. "How you makin' out?" He knew all the OSS debriefings here came from me. My prestige with him was pretty high. Jeez, if I asked him for a million dollars, he wouldn't even bat an eye. I told him what the connections were all about and what I had in mind: blowin' up railroads. He says, "We're collaborating with the Communist Party, boy. Isn't that interesting?" He always called me "boy," affectionately. He says, "But in your connection, make sure the Communist Party doesn't come out ahead." I said, "That's valid. They're out to win the war, we're out to win the war. I'll do the best I can to win this war." He said fine, and left.

"He recruited anybody who would fight Fascists," says Scario, "guys like Milton Wolff [and Goff], who fought with the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. They operated behind the lines and risked their lives. Donovan didn't care if they were communists." "One of the deals I had with Donovan," Wolff himself says, "was to set up a group that would go into Spain and overthrow Franco. To re-establish the Republican government that had been elected by the people. It never happened. Franco was a shrewd bastard. He kept all his options open, and Roosevelt never pushed him very hard." Shrewd indeed, and maybe harder to push from either direction than Wolff realized: according to William L. Shirer in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Hitler once visited Franco early during the war, still confident of victory, urging him to join the fun and share the spoils, but Franco kept up a palaver of unctuous irrelevancies till Hitler flounced off in a pet. Afterward, Hitler remarked to aides that he would rather have a dentist yank out all of his teeth than try arguing again with Franco. As for options, here in Terkel's book is Franco leaning over backwards to keep a very surprising one open, as another competent and inquisitive American recalls, Paul Edwards, who was rescuing war refugees for the United States Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA):

I sometimes worked in cooperation with the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish agency. When the Germans captured Greece, they shipped a lot of Jews to one of the extermination camps. The JDC and others intervened with Franco, who intervened with Hitler, and they were released on the promise that Americans would take them off his hands. They brought them down in boxcars to Spain. The Americans picked them up and took them to Casablanca. We brought them over by boat to Alexandria, put 'em on a train, and brought them up to my camp, six miles south of Gaza.

There were many currents flowing every which way. "One of our best writers [in the Office of War Information] was fired because he'd been with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain," says John Houseman. "Among the investigators were many who had worked for Henry Ford as union busters. They invented the term 'premature anti-fascists,' PAF." Irving Goff, "a kid from Brooklyn," PAF, is supposed to have been the model for Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* ("The way Gary Cooper blew that bridge—like blowing a seam in a coal mine. I've blown bridges. You put a detonator in the thing and then you'd better be twenty miles away"); he was one of the Lincoln veterans whom the army tried to box off as far as possible from war zones and, when they managed nonetheless to break free and do the job, wouldn't commission despite their indispensable intelligence-gathering forays and behind-the-lines heroism, but whom Donovan kept showing up in the nick of time to retrieve and reward: "When we got back, Major Sage and others wrote letters to Donovan: 'On our honor as officers and gentlemen, we cannot understand why Sergeant Goff and Sergeant Lasowski and Sergeant Feldsen are not made officers.' Donovan comes to the front and he makes us all second lieutenants right at the front." Donovan's curiosity about the front lines didn't stop with battlefield commissions: "We moved from North Africa into Sicily. Donovan's on the boat with us. He's on the beach with us. He's in a foxhole with us. Hell, we hit Anzio on a PT boat together. German plane came down, Donovan's standin' there. He was a great guy, but he had foolish guts, I yelled at 'im, 'Get down, general!' He wouldn't get down, and bombs droppin' all around."

Milton Wolff, another PAF, had a (retrospectively) farcical

world-girdling odyssey. He “wanted to be in the European action,” but of course the premature anti-intelligence (PAI) U.S. army shipped him to Seattle. He wangled a transfer from a sympathetic first sergeant whose outfit was slated for England, but “the day I got transferred he was sent to Alaska. . . . I didn’t care, we were going to England. Well, we went to North Africa. I got in touch with Donovan: Take me back. They sent a plane for me in North Africa, but by the time it got there we were on our way to India.” In Calcutta Wolff met a GI attached to General Stilwell’s group, which was coordinating with the Chinese army and about to go into Burma. “Just at this time the inspector general came to our outfit. The rank-and-file can come in and register their beefs. This is your one opportunity to bypass channels. . . . When the IG opened his office, I was the first in line. ‘I want to join Stilwell.’ ‘What are your qualifications?’ ‘I’m a trained infantryman, infantry officer, know map readings, elevations and arms, cones of fire, and so on.’ Great. He got me transferred. They flew me to Assam, where I joined Stilwell.” Then Burma; then all the way to Mindanao for guerrilla skirmishes with Merrill’s Marauders against the Japanese. Then “Stilwell brought me back to headquarters and gave me a second lieutenancy. He said I’d have to get a haircut, and gave me his barber. He knew about us, he knew about Spain. He was quite a guy.” Back to Calcutta “for a uniform and I got malaria.” While he was in the hospital “Donovan caught up with me. They shipped me out to Bari, Italy. I went down to a school in Brindisi training the guys. . . .”

Goff again: “Towards the end of the war I wrote up a mission to go to China. I got an immediate answer: Accepted. Donovan said he’d put us on the first boat.” But the proto-CIA spoiler Allen Dulles and the close of the war in Europe did them all in. “Donovan backed us up all the way down the line. He called me to Washington. The war was over May 8; May 10, I was on the U.S.S. West Point. And Milt Wolff was with me. The mission to China never came off”:

Donovan tells me there’s a twenty-million-dollar appropriation before Congress to wind up OSS work. A few months earlier, we were asked to write reports of what the future of the OSS should be. It turned out to be the CIA. Donovan was supposed to head it

up. But now he's under attack for having Communists in his organization. They're putting the heat on him.

He calls me in: "They're holding up the appropriation. We can't finish our work. I'm forced to let you go." Me and the other Spanish vets in the OSS. He gave us a letter attesting to our loyalty in action. I still got it home.

A very pluralistic society, in which people didn't necessarily behave according to power and manifest self-interest. Paul Edwards remembers Herbert Lehman, "my boss" at UNRRA, politician, Jewish, millionaire New York banker: "He had no more personality than a musk ox, but he was always on the side of the angels." They broke rules and moved mountains to save refugees, expected no thanks and got much less. Everywhere, for anybody who rather relished eating up not only miles of red tape but the anti-intelligence types that held tight at the other end, a heap of golden opportunities. The armed forces were as inflexibly segregated as if black servicemen were prisoners of war or "relocated" Japanese-American internees: separate and unequal housing, separate cars on troop trains, not admitted to the camp movie theater, not admitted to the PX, nothing but menial assignments; there were protests carried sometimes as far as full-fledged mutiny and there were indiscriminate blow-'em-away murderous reprisals; everything would be hushed up and the outfits shipped off. Travis Dempsey, who survived being shot three times and nearly paralyzed on one such occasion ("Some black soldier's eye had been kicked out for going into the PX to get a beer"), was moved around and hospitalized and furloughed and eventually sent back to the same base: "They had built a major service center for the black servicemen. They had opened up the main theater and blacks were permitted to go. (Laughs.) It appears that you had to kill some guys. There was never an inquiry, to my knowledge." "They" noticed that he had a high IQ, and "decided they were gonna make me a leader," but the black soldiers he led "were sent to cooking schools, digging schools, motor vehicle." Dempsey himself went to administrative school, but after three days was transferred out over his objections to take charge of another black cadre at Aberdeen Proving Ground, where in fact "for three weeks, I'm layin' around" till he's sent to

a Major Sloan, a tall, red-faced, freckled, moon-shaped-faced, big-blue-eyed ex-Texas Ranger. He said, "Can you type?" I said, "No, sir." "Have you ever worked in an office?" "No, sir." He reaches into the drawer and pulls out a typing book. He calls in a corporal and says, "You give Private Travis that desk behind you. He's gonna learn how to type."

He learns how to type, "got up to fifty-five words a minute," and Major Sloan calls him in again:

"Have you ever worked in a store?" "No, sir." He said, "I want you to work in the post exchange as a clerk." In about three months, he said, "We're gonna make you assistant manager." Within two months, I was the manager. This was a black PX. But that was not enough for him. He decided he wants me to manage the white PX as well. This was early '45, just before Roosevelt died. They were beginning to integrate the facilities. So I was the first guy to become manager of an integrated PX in the state of Maryland. I won first prize for the best-managed store in the Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Sloan brought the post commander down to me, a general: "We're gonna have the newspapers take pictures of you, 'cause we're very proud of what you're doin'." A couple of days later, he came back: "Travis, that picture will never appear in the paper. Those fellas can't stand the idea of a black man being able to operate a post exchange in this manner." The picture never appeared.

After the war, though Major Sloan wanted him to stay in and become an officer, he decided to take advantage of the GI bill, accepted his discharge, went to college, and "learn[ed] to read as a man twenty-seven years old! It's just like somebody lifted a veil off your eyes. (Laughs and cries.)" He had spent four years in the army. "Imagine Major Sloan! Would you believe that he insisted I study the Bretton Woods Reports and explain it to the troops? I, who could hardly read. See the boy run. The cat jumped the fence. How can I ever forget this experience and this man?"

Far less interesting, though, and taking up probably half the book is the face-to-face-with-the-enemy material: "They were boys like us"; "a sea of rubble"; "we had all become hardened"; "the veneer of civilization wore pretty thin"; "It was raining like hell. We were knee-deep in mud. And I

thought, What in the hell are we doin' on this nasty, stinkin' muddy ridge? What is this all about? You know what I mean? Wasted lives on a muddy slope." We know what he means, many's the time we've seen and heard it while crouched or crawling cheek by jowl with William Holden and Ralph Richardson and John Wayne (all dead and all on the Late Show), and mostly that's how it seems in these recollections, as if they've been filtered through eons of war movies. But even the great novelists aren't at their best when they're writing about the muddy slope of battle, even when like Tolstoy they're veterans themselves: it turns out drab or romantic, and in either case it feels like literature.

The sticking points are still the bomb and Russia. No fresh responses to either—is any possible after forty years?—but the bafflement about both is real and strong. If when the bomb fell you were in the service, especially if you were stationed on a Pacific island, you were ecstatic for the obvious reasons; later, you had qualms; many years later, you were armored into one single-issue stance or another but it never quite fitted, you couldn't help rattling around in it uneasily. If the bomb—at Hiroshima or Nagasaki or Bikini atoll—mutilated you in the instant or planted the cancer that decades later would bring you low, you suffered, complained, took up morality as your last cold comfort, and died. "You must realize we were not a worldly people. We were an isolated big country. We didn't know much about the Japanese and Japanese culture. They were yellow, they had squinty eyes, and they all looked evil. They were always evil in the movies, characters slinking around knifing people. You began to think of them not as human beings but as little yellow things to be eradicated. They looked different from the Germans." Yet when asked "Would the A-bomb have been dropped on Germany?" one of the Los Alamos physicists replies, "Oh, you bet. We would all have struck if it hadn't been." Furthermore, one of the crew members of the plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki gives what appears to be the definitive answer: "If that war woulda lasted, it would have been used in Europe, I know. We had a simulated flight, trainer things. You flew two, three thousand miles. Bombardier, myself, navigator. You flew these missions. And they was all in Germany.

That's what we based our thinkin' on. Japan was just timing. I think it was a last-minute decision on Truman's part."

And finally Russia. "The Russian alliance was never a thing of the heart. It was a calculated stratagem to defeat Hitler, with the help of American technology. I've had Russian generals tell me what won the war for them was that old Studebaker six-wheel truck." But on April 25, 1945, when American and Russian soldiers met at the Elbe and happily embraced, it wasn't only Studebakers, it was at least for the moment a thing of the heart; "we swore never to forget"; but governments are strange. "Goddamn it, we missed something. This is one of the tragedies of the death of Roosevelt. There was a *blind spot*. We're *on the threshold of destruction* because it didn't work." The national commander of American Ex-Prisoners of War, having recalled his liberation by the Russians in May 1945, is perplexed by the great change: "I don't think people can change like this. . . . What I'm sayin' is, it's public officials. I think it could be worked out. What I do understand, the Russian people do not have as much to say in the government as we do. Once our people are elected, we really do not have much anyhow. Governments are strange."

COMING IN THE HUDSON REVIEW, AUTUMN 1985:

ESSAYS: Harold Fromm on "Leonard Woolf and His Virgins"; Herbert Lomas on Wilfred Owen; and Dean Flower on Eudora Welty.

FICTION: "Houseraising" by Joyce C. Allen and "The Secretsharer" by William Hathaway.

LETTER FROM LONDON by Rachel Billington.

LETTER FROM DRESDEN by Robert S. Clark.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Tom and Ivy Confidential

Pity the poor biographers, for whatever they do will disappoint critics who really know what they should better have done. If they commit themselves to a long-term “comprehensive” account of their subject, the result will turn out to be snarled with detail, ridiculously fussy about its subject’s aunt’s brother’s eating habits, or its mother’s father’s economies as a sturdy manager of the paint company where the subject worked summers as a child. We have grown used to seeing the new biography of Dos Passos or Steinbeck (or Hemingway or Faulkner) placed once more as yet another example of the overweight—and usually American—academic burial of the writer in question whose career has been so assiduously followed for so many years by the scrupulous biographical servant. Often the end result is to make us think less—surely not more—of the master: think of Mark Schorer on Sinclair Lewis, or Lawrance Thompson on Frost. To read a recent biography of James Agee, is to feel mainly depressed, scarcely believing he could have written all those lively and life-giving reviews of films which, somehow, go down the drain as we follow the unedifying curve of Agee’s self-destructive life.

If the biographer doesn’t get rapped for being long-winded and academically pedantic about noting how many drinks X had on September 13, 1937, he or she may err (may *also* err) in failing to produce interesting criticism of the subject’s work. How much attention should a biography, such as Ian Hamilton’s on Robert Lowell, give to the poetry which, presumably, is the only reason we care about Lowell anyway? Does it matter much or at all that Quentin Bell’s account of Virginia Woolf is so critically unforthcoming with regard to her novels? Reviewers, and I speak as one of them, tend to look for significant gaps in the book to hand, and, ungrateful as we are, sometimes to dwell on what is missing rather than on what is there. Meanwhile there is the publisher’s message,

especially loud and clear over the past fifteen or so years: let's by all means have a biography, a "life," but make it palatable to the General Reader (as alluded to in the current postage stamp with its implausible slogan "A Nation of Readers") and don't stain it with, for God's sake, too much literary criticism about novels and poems written by your hero. (I speak here from unfortunate personal experience of a publisher's fear that the presumed General Public which could be coaxed into reading a narrative of the poet's life, would flinch from discussion of the poet's art.) So any writer of a "life" these days is in a good position to be faulted (1) for committing the American literary biography of excessive, often humorless detail, and (2) for failing to do justice to the work—the poems or novels its subject wrote.

As is well known by now, Peter Ackroyd's biography of Eliot is "unofficial," he having been refused permission to quote from Eliot's unpublished work or correspondence.¹ Undeterred by such non-cooperation with his enterprise, Mr. Ackroyd, an Englishman, forged ahead and in the astonishingly short time of eighteen months put together this substantial year-by-year account of the man, with, from time to time, short—very short—comments on the work. The commentary adds nothing to our understanding of that work; the biographical account, however, is a lucidly written, sympathetically intelligent description of Eliot's life from childhood in St. Louis to his final infirmities in London.² Much the most carefully described episode from the life is Eliot's marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood, and though a reader finishes these pages with a much fuller sense than he has had before (or than he cares to have even now) of the details of their years together, Mr. Ackroyd's appropriate comment on the relationship still leaves the mystery intact: "From the beginning they quite misunderstood each others' characters."

A short list of facts about Eliot's life which were new to this reviewer may suggest, for other readers, that they will like-

¹ T. S. ELIOT: A LIFE, by *Peter Ackroyd*. Simon and Schuster. \$24.95.

² During the last two years of Eliot's life he took twenty-six pills a day, prescribed for his heart, and Allen Tate, on a visit, describes him as leaning on two canes, too weak to raise himself to say goodbye to Tate. At a dinner with Eliot during his final trip to the United States, Igor Stravinsky noted his "ashen complexion and faltering walk": "The poor man bent over his plate, drinking but not eating."

wise find out new things, such as that his father, president of the Hydraulic-Press book company in St. Louis, made sketches of cats in his time away from the office. Or that Eliot's early "Preludes" were originally titled "Caprices in North Cambridge," or "Preludes in Roxbury." Or that early along he played Mr. Woodhouse in an amateur theatrical at Harvard, or that in later years when W. H. Auden asked him why he so liked to play patience, Eliot replied that "Well I suppose it's the nearest thing to being dead." Trivial pursuits perhaps? Yet the book lives in such exposures, as this one of Eliot's pushing his crippled roommate, John Hayward, along the Chelsea embankment and stopping one wet Saturday afternoon (the incident is recalled by Christopher Sykes) to watch a football match between the Marylebone dustmen and the Chelsea Municipal Maintenance Staff: "The forlorn scene fascinated Eliot and in spite of the cold and the drizzle he stayed and watched for a few minutes," says Ackroyd. Perhaps we may guess that his stay was prolonged *because* of the cold and the drizzle and the forlornness of the spectacle—it was probably the next best thing to playing patience. Whether it's a Saturday afternoon in Chelsea or an account of Eliot's work at Lloyd's bank, Mr. Ackroyd has a way of making the details stick.

For all this strong detail though, and while I would not (as Hugh Kenner and Anthony Hecht have already done rather vigorously) fault Ackroyd for his minimal or faulty comment on the poems—Hamilton's procedure in the Lowell biography is comparably minimal—there is a muted, slightly unreal quality to this narrative, so bare of Eliot's voice either in poems or prose or anecdote, while it is geared to hundreds of notes in the back of the book, directing us to this or that library collection, letter, or personal source. And it may also be that Mr. Ackroyd has been less than fully imaginative in his delineating of Eliot as cautious and depressed, though always enormously hardworking (Ackroyd's statistics on the number of activities and kinds of writing he kept going on at one time are striking). In reviewing the biography (*London Review of Books*, 1 Nov. to 14 Nov., 1984), Christopher Ricks says boldly that rather than being timid and prudential in his life ("Politic, cautious, meticulous" are the words Prufrock uses to describe himself) Eliot was in fact enormously bold. To have

escaped his American relatives, thrown over an academic career in the philosophy department at Harvard, moved permanently to England and impulsively married a young woman he knew almost nothing about—this was not, not at all, Prufrock's story. In Eliot's unforgettable formulation from *The Waste Land*, it was more like "The awful daring of a moment's surrender."

If, reading Ackroyd's biography, one is moved to think about the fate of Eliot's poetry—and I do not think we are necessarily so moved—then consider the following possibility and judge the extent to which it may be true for the individual reader. The case is that unlike other British and American poets of this century's first half—unlike Hardy or Yeats or Stevens or Pound or Frost—Eliot did not publish very many poems. (There are lots of ways of counting, but I end up with roughly sixty-five titles.) So that, in my own experience, rereading him carries relatively little of the sense of discovery—of discovering new poems certainly, or even of reading one truly for the first time—that one has abundantly with, say, Hardy or Stevens. With Eliot, once you get (as one "gets") *The Waste Land*, "Gerontion," *Four Quartets* pretty thoroughly down, so that one can as it were recite them in the shower, the question becomes what to do next, besides taking another shower. We don't spend much time rereading the poetry because it's already there in our heads—all we have to do is recite it. By contrast Eliot's criticism is endlessly repaying of rereading, comparable in English only to Samuel Johnson's, another splendid poet whose stock of splendid poems is a limited one.

With Ivy Compton-Burnett, an acknowledged "minor" writer and cult figure for certain sorts of Anglophiles, the question is to what extent one can make a claim for her larger than that of an always reliable product which over the course of fifteen novels (from 1925 to, posthumously, 1971) provided sharp stuff like this remark from *Daughters and Sons* quoted by her biographer, Hilary Spurling: "Plain living and high thinking are best . . . but our standard of thinking is not high enough to warrant the living's being too plain."³ To re-

³ IVY: THE LIFE OF IVY COMPTON-BURNETT, by Hilary Spurling. Knopf. \$22.95.

veal my bias at the start, I would quite willingly forsake any future reading of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* or *The Years* in favor of any single novel by Compton-Burnett. Still, she did not write *To the Lighthouse*, and there has always been, rightly, nervousness about highly praising someone whose books are so written to scale, so unvarying in their style, in their "format," so limited in their content, characters, plots. Whatever lack of balance there may be in Hilary Spurling's opinion of I.C-B. as a writer (it is an unqualifiedly high opinion) this biography must be admired for the rich document it is about a segment of English society previous to World War I. Part One of the book was published in England ten years ago (meaning that Mrs. Spurling has surely been working on the whole project for a decade and a half) and is especially rewarding for its portrait of Ivy's father, a homeopathic physician who wrote many books, one of them titled *Tumours of the Breast*, and for its account of the novelist's schooldays at Addiscombe College for the Daughters of Gentlemen at Hove, and at Royal Holloway College, twenty miles from London just outside Egham. The latter

had its own kitchen gardens, asparagus and strawberry beds, orchards and piggeries. Dinner in the great central dining hall was served by the butler and a line of starched maids off solid silver plate with specially woven monogrammed table linen. A procession in long dresses, often with trains on high nights, assembled every evening at seven o'clock and moved majestically in pairs from the drawing room through the library and museum under an avenue of candelabra along dangerously shining parquet floors . . .

Also notable is the account of the Cambridge milieu of Ivy's beloved younger brother, Noel (whom she visited at Cambridge, where she made a "stunning" impression on his Kings College friends).

Ivy was the eldest of Dr. Compton-Burnett's second batch of children—seven, added to the six his first wife bore him—none of whom produced a descendant. Her biographer sees a connection between Dr. Compton-Burnett's radicalism as a homeopathic physician and his daughter's experimentality as a reviser of nineteenth-century realistic-naturalistic fiction,

and she argues forcefully that the daughter's portrayal of domestic tyranny and its attendant horrors and humors, was the fruit of experience, of successive "tyrannical" personages—her father, her widowed mother, and herself. (Her two beloved brothers died young, Noel in World War I; her youngest sisters committed suicide together by an overdose of veronal.) Her first novel, *Dolores* (1911) was a lugubrious exercise in thrall to George Eliot, and it was not until she put her family behind and set up housekeeping with a lifelong companion, the historian of furniture Margaret Jourdain (whose own life Mrs. Spurling describes in perhaps excess detail), that she found her true style, and that "family" returned to haunt her novels. These, beginning with *Pastors and Masters* in 1925 are notable for what Pamela Hansford Johnson and others have called her "cruel, incisive wit," but which Hilary Spurling prefers to describe with words like honesty, tolerance, wisdom, and generosity.

In 1934 she and Margaret moved to a flat at Braemar Mansions, Cornwall Gardens, where she would live until her death. It was a withdrawal from "life," or at least an attempt to confine life to writing, occasional travel, and small entertainments of the happy few. At least two of those happy few, Frankie Birrell and Philip Toynbee, claim, on occasions far apart, to have become insensible at Ivy and Margaret's dinner table: "I can quite clearly remember the soup [wrote Toynbee]. Then, I suppose, we must have had fish, because when I woke up there *was* a plate of fish, uneaten, in front of me. As a matter of fact, my left hand was in it, covered with sauce. I was alone in the dining-room; the lights were burning, and when I looked at my watch I saw that it was past midnight. The ladies seemed to have gone to bed." Even as Hilary Spurling passes the story along, one wonders about its truth. Could there have been enough to drink at Braemar Mansions to propel Frankie or Philip into the comatose and the fish sauce? Would the ladies have allowed these literary gents to behave so slovenly at their table?

At any rate, one who has walked through Cornwall Gardens will appreciate the justice of Margaret Jourdain's assurance to a prospective visitor that "You'll recognise the house, it looks like Balmoral." The linoleum floors, primitive plumb-

ing and unheated bedrooms described by Mrs. Spurling also hit the right note.

"People say that things don't happen like they do in my books. Believe me, Janet, *they do*," Ivy remarked at one point to Janet Beresford, and it is a remark that readers of her novels will want to ponder. Whether or not things "happen" like they do in the books, do people, especially children, talk the way they are made to talk in those books?

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Henry Clare.

His sister glanced in his direction.

"They are pecking the sick one. They are angry because it is ill."

"Perhaps it is because they are anxious," said Megan, looking at the hens in the hope of discerning this feeling.

"It will soon be dead," said Henry, sitting on a log with his hands on his knees. "It must be having death-pangs now."

This is the very beginning of the beginning of *The Present and the Past*, but the children are warmed up already (Henry is eight, his sister seven) and the reader alerted that this will be no relaxing novel but one to which full attention—at least that—is required. (How many times in an I.C.B. novel does one find oneself backtracking on the page to see who in fact initiated the conversation one has been trying to follow, unsuccessfully, for the past two minutes?) It is a style to remember even if it occurs to you that some English children really do talk like this; indeed some of the fun in reading her comes from the uncertainty whether all those people—children, adults, even butlers and cooks—might not be really existing out there someplace, talking away.

Along with the biography I read or reread *Pastors and Masters*, *Men and Wives*, *More Women than Men*, *Manservant and Maidservant* (which she thought, perhaps rightly, her best), and *The Present and the Past*. (The last seems to me a good book for the first-time reader of I.C.B. to begin with.) As always, I was by turns pleased, touched, impatient, drifting, thrilled, and bored, and as always ended with no firmer conviction about just how high to rate this writer (after admitting that she is unique). I liked Hilary Spurling's bracketing of her with "much younger" novelists like Evelyn Waugh and An-

thony Powell, who also began to publish in the late 1920s, although she is both more strange and more in one key than either of them. It may be appropriate to quote the following exchange about Jane Austen from *Men and Wives* (1931):

"I am not speaking of the oft-instanced order of so-called humor," continued Mrs. Christy. "I hold no brief for Jane Austen and her kind. Woman though I am, I want something more involved with the deeper truths and wider issues of life."

... "What do you think of Miss Jane Austen's books, Jermyn?" said Dominic—"if I may approach so great a man upon a comparatively flimsy subject."

"Our row of green books with the pattern on the backs, Rachel?" said Sir Percy with a sense of adequacy in conversation. "Very old-fashioned aren't they?"

"What do the ladies think of the author, the authoress, for she is of their own sex?" said Dominic.

"I have a higher standard for greatness," said Agatha, "but I don't deny she has great qualities. I give her the word great in that sense."

"You put that very well, Mrs. Calkins," said Dominic, "I feel I must become acquainted with the fair writer."

"That is a great honour for her!" said Geraldine.

Perhaps such honor should also be deservedly bestowed on Ivy Compton-Burnett, who once said that she knew and loved Jane Austen so well that she no longer needed to read her, even while she had this to say about Henry James—"I hate people whose golden bowls are broken"—and even as her books kept Virginia Woolf awake at night ("Much inferior to the bitter truth and intense originality of Miss Compton-Burnett," wrote V.W., truthfully, with reference to *The Years* in comparison with Ivy's *Daughters and Sons*).

In the attempt to salute her own intense originality, most critics of the novels have concentrated on what they call her intimate knowledge of the tricks and disguises, the petty concealments and monstrous revealments, of the human heart. To my knowledge, only one of them (Benjamin DeMott in the Spring 1957 issue of this magazine) put his finger on what is so exhilarating about moments in her novels, when he noted that although the "savage heart" was surely dissected therein,

... yet the recurrent moment in them is that of harmony, communion, reconciliation. In their characteristic scene strangers meet and know each other's souls from a single remark. No bathetic outpouring of inner life follows, yet one feels the inner life proffered by both, accepted by both with bemused rueful pity; from the concord true wit upon the instant begins beautifully to flow.

This seems to me to put things with some of the originality displayed by I.C.B. herself, and it suggests the way she is both a comic and (in DeMott's phrase) a "utopian" novelist. It is lovely to hear, then, of her meeting Mr. Eliot at a party in Knightsbridge and coming home to Cornwall Gardens in a taxi with him and his second wife while (according to well-placed witnesses) "they talked about nothing but the forthcoming Rent Act, cake shops, fishmongers, greengrocers in the Gloucester Road and where to go for the best fillet steak." She wrote afterwards to her good friend, the novelist Elizabeth Taylor, about the Eliots: "Apparently she's always adored him, although she was his secretary for years. I am sure if I had been his secretary for a fortnight I should have wanted to poison him, not marry him . . . Yes, I should have run round to the chemist's for threepennyworth of poison after a very short time." The high merit of Mrs. Spurling's biography is to make us quite appreciate the woman who talked this way.

T. R. HUMMER

The Underworld

Jefferson Island, Louisiana

White salt-glint
On the crystal curve of not-sky
Where no stars are set

In any discernible infinity:
And out of the shadow-edge
Of these arc-lights' potency

Something comes moving, huge
And thunderous: earth-mover,
Crawling a glittering bulge

Of firmament: someone touches a lever
And it drops its load
In front of a gear-grinding Caterpillar

Our friendly guide confides
Was, like everything down here,
Dismembered and lowered

Through the same ten-by-ten-foot elevator
We dropped in by: a quarter-mile
Subsurface. *There's a lake up there,*

He says, pointing at the ceiling: and while
He tells us the geological witchcraft
Of salt-dome formation, I have metaphysical

Doubts: which came first, the shaft
Or the machine?
How small can an earth-mover make itself,

Even taken to pieces? I am nine
In this memory, no
Perfect tourist: I imagine

A squad of strong-men trying to
Cram a bulldozer blade through
An elevator door: it just won't go,

No matter how they angle it. And it seems so
Unworkable a story, like the Sunday School
Stuff about God and the Garden, too

Strange to be serious over: all
That trouble from nothing
But an apple? Adam that big a fool?

But everything seems unlikely: being
Here in the Salt Mines,
Floor, walls, ceiling

One impervious diamond-shine
Of what is in the process of becoming
Table salt: unlikely, being here again

In memory: I remember nothing
Of what was clearly a tedious
Journey, nothing of the road, nothing

Of the jokes my father wouldn't have tried to resist:
The Salt Mines, where they send
Bad communists:

Or where all poor bastards get the goddamn
Sweat they have to have on their brows to live by:
I recreate my father in his foolish imitation-

Tourist-hardhat, base-metal painted silvery-
Aluminum: *Regulation*, says our conscientious guide:
We have ours on, too, my mother and I:

Memory: I make them beautiful and good,
 My parents, and they love me:
 And here we are again with all the dead

Past. The guide is saying *Breathe*
In through your mouths: we do,
 And come to life with the heavy

Taste of salt on our tongues: *it is so*
Strong in the air it condenses
In your saliva. Alive again, we go

Everywhere he tells us:
 Up on a high glass-mound of crystals
 Jack-hammered out of the porous

Lake-water-rotted walls:
 And against a brilliance only arc-lights
 Can be throwing, I see them again in profile,

The human silhouettes they are, my parents, looking out
 Silver-headed over the whole white hellish ant hill
 The guide says never stops, day or night,

And has not stopped, the tremble
 In what passes for earth, for air,
 This whole skull-

Hollow immensity full of the roar
 Of memory's machinery:
 My father and mother

Touch hands in the unknowing fear of lovers, and I
 Hear the guide shout to me over the furious
 Reverberation: *You should know, nothing we*

Bring down here can last:
They go soon: the salt, the humidity:
They rust.

Legal Limit

an adulterers' story

No matter what it means
To jerk one up
Through scum-green

Surface, out of the depth
Of murk lake-water is,
I landed it, a bream

Too small to keep: but I was
So young it seemed
Huge, big as both

The hands you hold against you
In your half-
Sleep, my hands, grown now

Out of that boy's measure
Into yours: a man's,
Ready for the obscure

Shapes a woman's skin
Takes in dark rooms, ready
To quicken to your childlike mumble

When you say *Tell me a story*:
Touching you, I can tell
How my hands in memory are

Strangely diminished, as though
I am not seeing them as they were
But focus the boy I was through

The backward-distancing lens
This story can't help being:
The dangled fish, the hands,

The boy and his unknowing
Of what is and is not enough:
I kept it, I looped a string

In a slipknot through the sawtooth
Bloodred of gills, swung
That blade-thin bright body back

Against algaed surface-tension
Right-angled into the soup of lake,
The willow limb I tied it on

Unnaturally quivering in the darkening
Evening: I walked away down the dam,
Still hungry for that quickening

Rod in my hand: and now I am
Cupping the curious weight
Of your breasts as you turn

To listen: I am wishing I could say
I went back in that blind afternoon
And missed it, but the truth is

I clean forgot about it,
That goddamned little fish
I guess I knew in my heart

Was not worth fooling with:
Diminished in memory, in story, to
A trembling, a breath

Of wind on water where there is no
Wind, a ripple at midnight,
A rising: and when I come

Again months later, I remember it
Only when I stumble
Over a limp length

Of string: I pull on it:

In that moment of resistance, I clench
Both hands hard, drag it out:

Lying above you now,
The story almost over,
I see it again, I know

What surfaces obscure,
What strikes from below
In starved, bone-jarring motion:

The snake and the small fish it swallowed
Both caught on that twine and torn clean
By quick-kissing mouths to

An intricate fusion of skeleton
No skill of hands can undo:
These two made one.

JON STALLWORTHY

Windfalls

There are stars in the grass,
Orion behind
the apple tree. I'll find
a jam jar and a glass

and, kneeling in the dark
where amorous fireflies,
catching each other's eyes,
speak with a tender spark,

I'll fill an indoor sky
with fallen starlight—
enough, at least, to write
a love poem by.

JEANNE FOSTER HILL

The Pearl River

This little finger, she reassured,
rolling the baseball-stunned knuckle
of the child's left little finger between her padded thumb
and forefinger, couldn't be broken.
It is so limber, it could be bent
like a sapling under weight of snow to earth
and not snap.

Doe and fawn
stop at the side of the road
and turn their heads.

She is as doe to fawn,
that teacher, who only once
became enraged and broke
the scissors against the desk. The little girl sat
amazed.

But fingers . . .
I've said what I could say
about them.

The knobby limbs of the fawn
look fragile, as if they might be broken
by the slightest misstep
in the stubble, as she whisks
into shadow.

We who have felt pain in the heart
like the stab of a broken rib, whisper to ourselves
and bend over the young sea horse
unfurling its head
from the heart of a fern.

And smell the rich earth at the floor of the woods.
And smell the sprouting of pubic hairs.

Baby, baby, baby,
you are nothing but a crystal skull
we hold up to the moonlight
for seeing what might have been,
a different life
paralleling this one,
as the equator runs around the
belly of the earth
and the tropic of concern
around its head.

For this child too has seen the head of hen
separated from
the body of hen,
for she too has seen the chunky
body of hen, separated from
the head of hen, run circles
around the tree stump, where hatchet and head lay,
run headless under the calm, observant gaze
of the loblolly pines.

And the house was watched over,
its silver-tin roof shooting light from the sun
into the very hearts of those pines.
The swing on the screened porch
never completely still, creaking gently,
was occupied by the breeze
or an aunt's prevision of the days
after her last days. And the clearing
around the house absorbed the fall
of footsteps, stored in the needle-covered memory bank
of soil.

Nothing was simply let go.

She in her blue pinafore, trimmed with tiny red and yellow
flowers and green leaves, was afraid

of the very cousins—the red-haired Jim
 and the green-eyed Barbara and their hairy friend.
 She on the card table under the sheet,
 the toiling witches above her.
 She didn't know what would happen.
 But nothing was let go.

The late nights of canasta under the yellow lights,
 the taste of the cigarette,
 the tree house,
 the rattler,
 the artesian well,
 the water moccasins,
 the swimming hole.
 Nothing would let go.

Their shouts went into the secret hearts of the pines
 and were never let go.

For this child too has been awakened from sleep
 by a thumping of wings
 inside the pillow,
 by shoes shuffling in the closet,
 has arisen and entered the tunnel behind
 the rack of clothes,
 crept down the stairs
 to the water's edge,
 where the boat waits.
 For this child too has inherited the oven.

The Pearl River, the dividing line,
 winds like a water moccasin through the red clay soil.
 The moon turns its full face toward
 the upward turned face, and the river shines
 like pearl. Upon its surface
 a water moccasin carves the shape
 of a worker's scythe. A shadow
 white as the madonna lily moves from shore
 into the pines. Everything was kept
 under their cloaks. The song

curls like smoke back into the carapace
of a white girl's ear.

Kept all these years,
a treasure watched over by the pirate's ghost,
the pearl in the oyster growing in a bed of mud,
the milk before it is milked from the fangs,

the song wants a whiff of the heavy incense of its forefathers,
the southern pines, to unfold itself, it wants
the mockingbird's notes, to recall itself
from the labyrinth.

A water moccasin going home
on the surface of the Pearl River carves
the scythes of negro workers. A black man
at the water's edge raises his voice
to the moon who learned long ago to turn
its full face toward the upward turned face
shining like black silver. A shadow
white as a madonna lily moves away
under the dark green cloaks of our forefathers,
the loblolly pines. A slender woman walks out the other side
into daylight.

For she too has seen the hen
run in circles around the tree stump,
the fore-shortened life running out
of the headless body like the breath
from a nightmaring mouth.

Baby, baby, baby,
you are nothing but a crystal skull
we hold up to the moonlight
for seeing what might have been.

The swing on the screened porch
occupied by the breeze or an aunt's prevision
of the days after her last
days.

Everything is kept, but nothing
is easily recovered.

Uncle Al laid down the hatchet.
The green-eyed Barbara, the red-haired Jim,
and Harry, their friend, stood around and watched.
The parents watched.
Those sober pines stood around
and watched.
Young things are so fragile, they whispered.
And at night under the yellow light,
while the parents played canasta,
moth wings bumped against the screens.

A child's swallowed screams went to the hearts of the pines
and were never let go.

The Pearl River is the dividing line,
winding through the red clay soil.
In the moonlight the river shines
like pearl.
Is that you?
Is it you?
Is it you, girl?
On the surface a water moccasin
carves its way home.
White as a madonna lily, a shadow
moves away under the dark green cloaks
of our forefathers. In daylight
a woman walks out the other side. Is it you?
The song curls back into her ear.
She pauses to bend over the new birth
of a sea horse from a fern.
Young things are so fragile, she whispers,
and remembers the teacher who stroked the knuckle of her left
little finger. Only once did she become enraged
and break the scissors against the desk.

But fingers . . .
I've said what I could say
about them.

The Heron

I walk the shore about to leave
the north country forever,
its sliding fogs, the wide dustless light
that kindles the green wave,
my small house under the wings
of a double spruce,
the yellow graves on the slope a cove away
where the families lie—
scent of blackberries sharp
sharp
in August air.

I search for a stone like a starfield,
a stone of stones flecked with mica-dust of stars,
glacier-etched with orbits, streaks, whorls.
I will carry it far from here.

A rain of gull cries falls
out of the sky like stones.
From far I see the great heron cranking home,
fog on its wings.
Leave . . . leave the stone, it cries.

This country ticks in my wrist.
I can let the stone go.
I let it fall from my fingers.
I let it fall from my fingers.
I let it go.

JEROME MAZZARO

Awakening to Fog

Fog covers the whole city,
and awakening to its mist,
we put off rising, as if
more sleep might burn it off.
On the river are foghorns
and the cracks of ice floes breaking.
In part built of last winter's snow,
they yield now to spring warmth.

We, too, yield to the heat,
pressed prematurely out
like hothouse blossoms.
Above, a thin rainbow
circles the shrouded sun,
parodying that clear ring
within which our sights move.

Except for no salt spray,
it might be an Alaskan coast,
or the Antarctic.
We think of our own needs for travel,
how long we've been at home,
satisfied in our tight circles.

Our dreams go drifting back
like floes into the fog,
emerging unaccountably
in long beds of iris—yellow
and blue and hazy in the sun.

Morning Reflection

No longer the teenager looking for the man,
you stare at wrinkles in your face,
thinking they are the small cracks
of a world shattering about you.
Through the screen, you hear gulls
crying in the gutters, a neighbor's mower
whirring through a lawn, and pause briefly,
in reflection, for a farther sound.
Downstairs, the quarreling kids are
eager to be brought to school,
the wife is packing lunch for work.
Orders are running out like water
in the basin before you.
Customers wait like claimants.
You splash on some cologne.
Beyond what you can see, there's nothing.
Even the razor's drawn no blood.

W. R. JOHNSON

The Youth of Achilles

In silken heat beneath the amber wig
Even in calm the eyes of a murderous bird
Survey the green field and the greener sea
The wide white distances where freedom was
The luck, the terror
Under the sleeping sun
Whose force a dappled awning disallows
Pale Deidamia slumbers, at her side
Hearing the pebbled shore, smelling the wind
He cannot sleep for whom the crimson scream
The fun of death is everywhere, his sigh
Answers imperfect her chaste murmurings

Past midnight when the raucous sea was stilled
In frozen moonlight and there was no sound
Except the watchmen whispering, or their feet
Shuffling the curve of the dim stairs
Beneath his clumsy thumbs her nipples bloomed
In first perfection of their radiance
He had not ever guessed what beauty was
Within him till he moved within her beauty
Finding amid her pleasure and her smiles
His proper self reflected, then her sleep
Became his sleep, a place of silent fire
At dawning turned, astonished, from her arms
Afraid, unknowing in her womb arose
The evil that was Pyrrhus . . .

Flutter of ivory wing, green shadows strewn
Against the bronze thighs and the slender chest
In Troilus' avid eyes the whirring doves
He moves as silent as a morning wind
To fetch them for his cage, Achilles waits

Hidden in flowering boughs until the boy's
 Lean clever hand was stretched to clasp the white
 Shimmering loveliness, and catches him
 Enfolds him down upon the thick warm grass
 Unending kisses close upon the curses
 Shivers of bliss, thin shoulders, laughing teeth

Like the wild boy whose tunic talons gripped
 From fear to rapture raged the violent heart
 Beneath him far, amazed, the widening world
 The shining seas, the blossoming of islands
 Into the vast blue clarities of sky
 So now involuntary joy invades
 The fierce disconsolate mouth, soft eyes soft lips
 The tilted jaw, its hint of gilded down
 This flesh distilled to pleasure
 Years after, this same face from its lopped head
 Between the sandalled feet, past the bright sword
 Will stare again upon the victor's gaze

Like Hektor's face, the silence dust and weeds
 Stench of the rotting face, the busy flies
 Clamor of birds in the unclesing wind

Unlooked for luck impatient Chiron found
 One somnolent afternoon, the son of Peleus
 His sullen charge, plucking the dissonant strings
 Those awkward indolent fingers, hit or miss
 Brutal, perfunctory, mocking, suddenly
 A minor song of ancient Linos shines
 In faltering rhythms, unmistakably
 Out of its silences, translucent tears
 Like rain on dawn's grey shingle beat and beat
 Out of the heart of the inarticulate lyre
 The massive shoulders shiver, the taut neck
 Surrenders to the bright implacable sway
 Old griefs have found an unexpected mouth
 The callow face, the blue indifferent eyes
 Are lit with splendid sorrow, Chiron laughs

ROBERT S. CLARK

Music Chronicle

FOR THOSE TO WHOM MUSICAL CREATION and execution are more than just an occasional beguilement, keeping past and present in balance is difficult. The past constantly threatens to swamp us emotionally, to drape its creators and its executants in an impenetrable glory fashioned largely of wish fulfillment. This is nothing new—nostalgia is a permanent human affliction, and has been an engine of Western art at least since the day Homer picked up his lyre to chant those lays peopled with the likes of Menelaus, Agamemnon, Electra and Odysseus. In our time, the weight of the past has become particularly burdensome for living composers and performers, who must contend not only with legend and the tendency of memory to enhance strengths and erase weaknesses, but with the accumulation of three centuries of printed scores and one of recordings—a massive psychic impediment that Brahms epitomized when he said that he could not set pen to music paper without hearing the “tread of the master” (Beethoven) behind him.

Critics don’t help; indeed, they are part of the problem, endlessly measuring the present against an impossibly inflated yardstick of the past. In recent years we have had such influential figures as Harold Schonberg, late of *The New York Times*, and *Commentary*’s Samuel Lipman lamenting the decline of practically every aspect of musical life and art since the flood of German and Russian Jewish emigrés from Hitler’s and Stalin’s tyrannies began to dwindle to a trickle here and in Western Europe. (Such critical tunnel vision is the analogue of the proclivity of commercial organs to endow the current stars—the Pavarottis and the Perlman—with godlike virtues.) If we are not careful, we imbibe an unconscious assumption that no pianist can yield pleasure but Rachmaninoff or Horowitz, no singer but Melchior or Flagstad or Lehmann, no cellist but Casals, no composer born after Strauss and Stravinsky.

A recent weekend spent sampling New York’s musical wares could serve as a corrective. The three musical events I took in had something in common: all revolved around music that was not heard—or at least was nothing more than an oddity—as recently as a quarter century ago, performed by relatively young musicians only recently enjoying or yet to enjoy unequivocal celebrity. And the three events were united too by the unimpeachable excellence of the performances.

A Friday evening late in January brought to Carnegie Hall the Los Angeles Philharmonic under its principal guest conductor, the young (thirty) Englishman Simon Rattle. The program was novel: the New York premiere of *Riverrun* for piano and orchestra by the Japanese-American composer Toru Takemitsu, a work commissioned by the Philharmonic for Peter Serkin and performed by him; and Deryck Cooke's performing version of the Tenth Symphony of Gustav Mahler, who left the score complete in sketches but unfinished in orchestration at his death in 1911. Of *Riverrun*—the title taken from *Finnegans Wake*—Takemitsu writes, "The music flows in the form of a musical tributary derived from a certain main current, wending its way through the scenery of night toward the sea of tonality." And watery the piece certainly is: it ripples by in short order, leaving a small damp patch in the mind to mark its passing. Its basic motivic material goes through a variety of transforming devices, most of them yielding a cluster of coloristic effects; there are microtones, crescendos heavy with percussion and extended arpeggiated passages for the solo instrument. Serkin displayed appropriate delicacy and fleetness of finger, and an admirable selflessness in deploying his considerable talents to so modest an end.

Mahler's mammoth Tenth was something else again. Orrin Howard's fatuous "Stagebill" notes made much of the composer's mental anguish while writing it, and Rattle, who has made something of a specialty of this work (he is quoted disarmingly on another page of "Stagebill" as saying, "Somehow it does seem sensible to play music that other people are not doing"), wrung every gesture for the maximum of Mahlerian *Weltschmerz*. For me, though the opening Adagio ranks with Mahler's best, too much of the remainder—like all of his later symphonic works except the Eighth and *Das Lied von der Erde*—suffers from his tendency to confuse creative afflatus and excess of wind. Yet there are many eloquent passages, suggesting that the composer was on the verge of a stylistic purgation and consolidation that might have led to finer things if he had lived.

The Los Angeles players shone in this exacting and surely exhausting exercise. The tuttis were rich, shrewdly blended and never raucous (the auditorium's celebrated kindness to massed tone may have helped); the instrumental solos were superb, and Mahler's characteristic counterpoint between one or two desks from each orchestral section was clear and idiomatic. The strings in particular showed off a substantial glowing tone that was never syrupy. Both conductor and orchestra deserve credit for managing deftly the tricky metrical and tempo shifts in the scherzos.

On Saturday afternoon the Metropolitan Opera Company presented a rendering of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* that called to mind Colin Davis's remark that opera is an irresistible challenge just because it is impossible to get everything right. From where I sat for this hearing, the impossible happened: there was not a single jarring

note or false move of a magnitude that punctured the suspension of disbelief.

It is usually the case that the company is "up" for the Saturday matinees that are broadcast nationally, and it must have been so on this occasion. The orchestra under James Levine played the complex instruction-littered and hazard-strewn score as if it had been created to do nothing else. True, some of the instructions were bypassed and the hazards skirted rather than mastered, but this is necessary even when the result is not the idiomatic fervor that marked the afternoon. Levine and colleagues made the work sound like another repertoire piece—a remarkable achievement in an opera that only came to the Met repertoire in 1959, and in subsequent years, even under more than competent leaders such as Davis and Karl Böhm, could sound tentative, strained and groping.

Likewise on stage: none of the principals paid much attention to Berg's distinction between sung passages, *parlando* and *Sprechstimme*, that peculiar Schoenbergian technique that lies somewhere between speech and song. But only an incorrigible spoilsport could ask more of the four chief singers. The Austrian baritone Christian Boesch was vocally assured and consistently believable as Wozzeck, seizing your sympathy as he shaved the Captain in the first scene and never sacrificing it thereafter to cheap theatrical or doctrinaire shots. The newest of our international soprano superstars, Hildegard Behrens, brought her riveting musicianship and histrionic gifts to the role of Marie, and the infrequency of sustained vocal lines in the role imposed no obstacle on her strenuously produced tone, tense yet attractively womanly. Ragnar Ulfung's familiar Captain and Franz Mazura's Doctor were both masterly portraits, situated delicately in the territory between verisimilitude and surrealism that both the opera and this production occupy.

Caspar Neher's sets and costumes, stemming from that 1959 staging, have been freshened and rationalized, and Gil Wechsler's lighting is less lurid and more effective than the last time I saw the production. Another strong element in the afternoon's impact was Levine's decision to do the work without intermission. Berg, who spoke of wanting to see *Wozzeck* as a film, would have approved.

Sunday afternoon, again in Carnegie Hall, the well respected Russian pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy offered more music that was virtually unheard twenty-five years ago: Rachmaninoff's Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42, and Six Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39. Though the opus numbers are close, the pieces are actually separated by fifteen years in the composing, the former in 1932, the latter in 1917. The Variations display the composer's highly mannered harmonic style, familiar from the Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini and the late concertos; both works are full of notes, very "pianistic," so it is said, in their decorated and elaborated facileness. After intermission came Chopin: the F Minor Ballade, a couple of Noc-

turnes and an Intermezzo, and the C-sharp Minor Scherzo. Credit Ashkenazy with playing the Rachmaninoff with as much apparent devotion as he did the Chopin. To everything he imparted an elevated discrimination manifested in clarity of articulation, structural finesse and nicely pointed rhythmic pulse. The wonderful Scherzo was the crowning achievement of the recital, spread out like a road map for the listening mind yet sparkling with wit and fancy.

On a later visit to New York I managed to squeeze into a performance of the Metropolitan's popular new production of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Premiered fifty years ago, the opera had never before been mounted by the Met—ironically, for it might have been given its first performance there had the financier Otto Kahn, the theater's principal early benefactor and a friend of Gershwin's, lived to see the work completed.

Porgy and Bess is something of a puzzle. As a theater piece, it seldom fails to work, even in a production as fussy and inflated as the Met's. But many auditors leave a performance feeling vaguely unsatisfied and uneasy. I don't think that this is a matter either of the adequacy of Gershwin's musical talents to opera or of the suitability of DuBose Heyward's folktale and its Catfish Row colored folk to operatic treatment—both called into question by Virgil Thomson shortly after the work's debut. Certainly Gershwin failed to solve entirely the problem of continuity that has bedevilled every operatic composer since Wagner “invented” the through-composed opera and bequeathed it, for better or worse (recitative and *parlando* turn out to have been quite satisfactory musico-dramatic devices), to his successors by force of will and genius. But neither did Puccini or Strauss or Charpentier, some of Gershwin's models, and if arid and clumsy stretches are more noticeable than in *Bohème*, *Rosenhavali* or *Louise* (and I'd be willing to argue that), the earlier composers had more practice. I believe Gershwin possessed creative powers equal to the challenge of a continuous musical fabric, if he had lived to try again. As for the story, I see no distinction between it and the stuff of *Cavalleria Rusticana* or *Il Tabarro* sufficient to render it untenable on the operatic stage.

I think *Porgy's* weakness lies only partly in the passages linking the well-known and beloved songs and choruses. Part of it lies too in the very fecundity of Gershwin's melodic gifts as evidenced in these. Memorable and moving as the set pieces are, Gershwin perhaps relied too much on them, yet they are too close to his musical comedy numbers; they do not develop, expand, flower and branch. And this characteristic is linked to a corresponding one in the libretto: none of the characters interact with one another in an extended and significant way—about the only really tension-generating scene is that between Crown and Bess on Kittiwah Island. There is, finally, something rather static about *Porgy and Bess*.

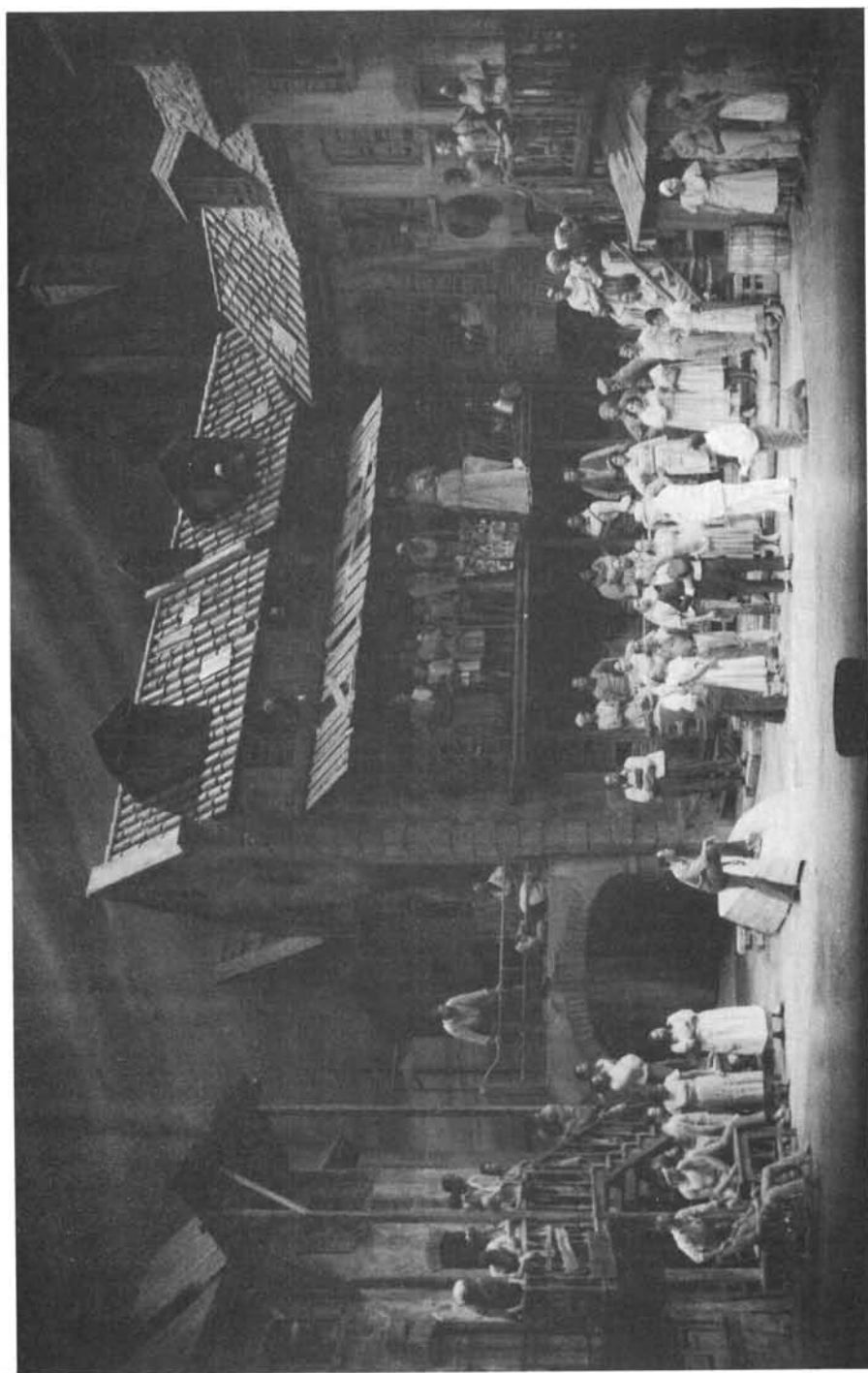


Photo credit: James Heffernan

Act II, Scene 1 (Cafish Row) from George Gershwin's
"Porgy and Bess."

The Met's do-it-up-dandy approach put a couple of coats of varnish over these qualities. The best that can be said for the production is that it was thoroughly professional, and that it was good to hear those beautiful tunes sung by solidly trained voices. Simon Estes vocalized well, but his Porgy was lifeless. Grace Bumbry simply proved, if anyone doubted it, that Bess is no role for a *prima donna assoluta*, whatever her color. Her elevated diction clashed badly with the lyrics' Catfish Row patois, and she substituted cliché-vamp strutting and posturing for an attempt to make Bess's insecurity and vulnerability come to life. Past the leads, things got better: Gregg Baker made a vocally distinguished and dramatically powerful Crown, usually the weak spot in a *Porgy* cast; Florence Quivar was a touching Serena, and Charles Williams a feisty and charming Sportin' Life. Splendid as the all-black chorus and dancers of the Workshop Ensemble of the Dance Theatre of Harlem were, their efforts were stylized rather than stylish. James Levine conducted well and lovingly.

Most important, perhaps, the production was a powerful symbol: the principal temple of American operatic art embracing an experimental work by a master of musical comedy, based on a fable of black life and using (as the Gershwin estate stipulates) an all-black cast. It was high time.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS



1965 · 1985

MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Repertory in Spite of Itself

THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM COMPANY's spring season at City Center threw into relief one of the more interesting and less palatable issues of modern dance: its unusual dependence for its survival on the individual styles of its creators. The first modern dancers defined themselves resolutely as opposed to academies, and their several techniques were codifications, at least in part, of their physical preferences. Even with today's eclectic toleration for any body discipline or quirk that makes for interesting movement, the most notable young choreographers imprint something personal not only on their choreography but on the dancers who work with them. Eventually, though, the style-givers cease to inhabit their own work, and a crisis of continuance must be faced. During the past fifteen years several leaders of established companies with personally crafted styles have stopped dancing—Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey, Paul Taylor—and now Cunningham and Twyla Tharp are going through long periods of transition to the role of non-dancing choreographers. Once they get past the trauma of this dramatic surrender to the aging process, their work seems to change.

No longer dancing, they no longer have to see their dancers as extensions of themselves. They can demand more without feeling at a loss; they can house their ideas in more streamlined, beautiful bodies with higher technical skills than they had been able to attain. Their dances seem more objective. At the same time, without their verifying presence onstage, without the evangelical zeal that envelops dancers who are translating for the first time the visions of a master, their companies seem to lose character. The choreography itself may continue to grow, but those dancing it seem more bland, more homogenous with the rest of the culture and less devoted to their own aberration from it. When young dancers break away, as they're meant to and as they must, modern dance survives not through the imitators but through the oddballs who do something else with the ideas they've inherited.

Just to take the Cunningham line of succession, alumni and disciples like Kenneth King, Douglas Dunn, Viola Farber and Steve Paxton have been working independently for twenty years and have become leaders of the postmodern dance, which in turn has spawned the New Wave or neo-anti-postmodern dance that includes Cunningham-related stars Karole Armitage and Charles Moulton.

These are all distinct choreographic personalities, though their doctrinal or technical ties to Cunningham are still evident.

Over the past ten years Cunningham has given himself a diminishing role in his own dances, and it's fascinating to watch his creative response to this passage. For a while, his new pieces seemed to me a lot like classroom studies. The dancers, whether on their own or with Cunningham himself looming in the background as preceptor or benign judge, seemed to be taking a final exam to test their virtuosity. Liberated from technical restrictions never previously acknowledged, and taking his own vocabulary as a base—a quasi-balletic use of the feet, a pulled-up but bendable torso, arms and head that could swerve off on their own—Cunningham seemed to be looking for all the possible combinations of gesture, timing and directionality. During this period too, he spent about half his creative energies in making video-dances with Charles Atlas, often translating to the stage what he had first constructed for the camera. The dancers in the completed videos, as well as in the staged versions, sometimes seemed to be hardly more than experimental Pac-men that he moved around to get new effects of depth perception, scale and design.

It was hard to tell these dances apart, and harder still to remember the particular movement content of each, but then, creating a catalogue of masterpieces has never been Cunningham's intention. If anything, he has imposed a sort of institutionalized diffidence on his choreography, refusing to explain it or even to set it up in such a way that plots or development would be evident to the viewer. He didn't want to give his dances a "meaning" in the conventional sense. I guess it seemed to him that the only way to avoid having the audience interpret the dance as a personal message of his own was to forestall any interpretation. He adopted chance devices of composition, deliberate fragmentation, simultaneity of dissimilar elements, and defocussing of the proscenium space as regular procedures, and a whole generation of dance audiences and young choreographers accepted movement as the primary subject of a dance.

But repertory is a handy concept if only for identifying what you like, and people continued to try to figure out what made each new Cunningham dance different. It's hard to do this because Cunningham bypasses the big categories other choreographers consider first in making new dances: how to make a good contrast with the rest of the repertory, show the dancers off in different movement styles or relationships or costumes, give the audience a different kind of thrill or put it in a different mood. Cunningham's dances over the course of an evening or a season look very much the same, occur in very similar open-field decors and soundscapes that never have to intrude on the choreography in a qualitative way but that sometimes give inadvertent support. The dancers don't dress up in special costumes—just plain dance clothes with occasionally a sweater

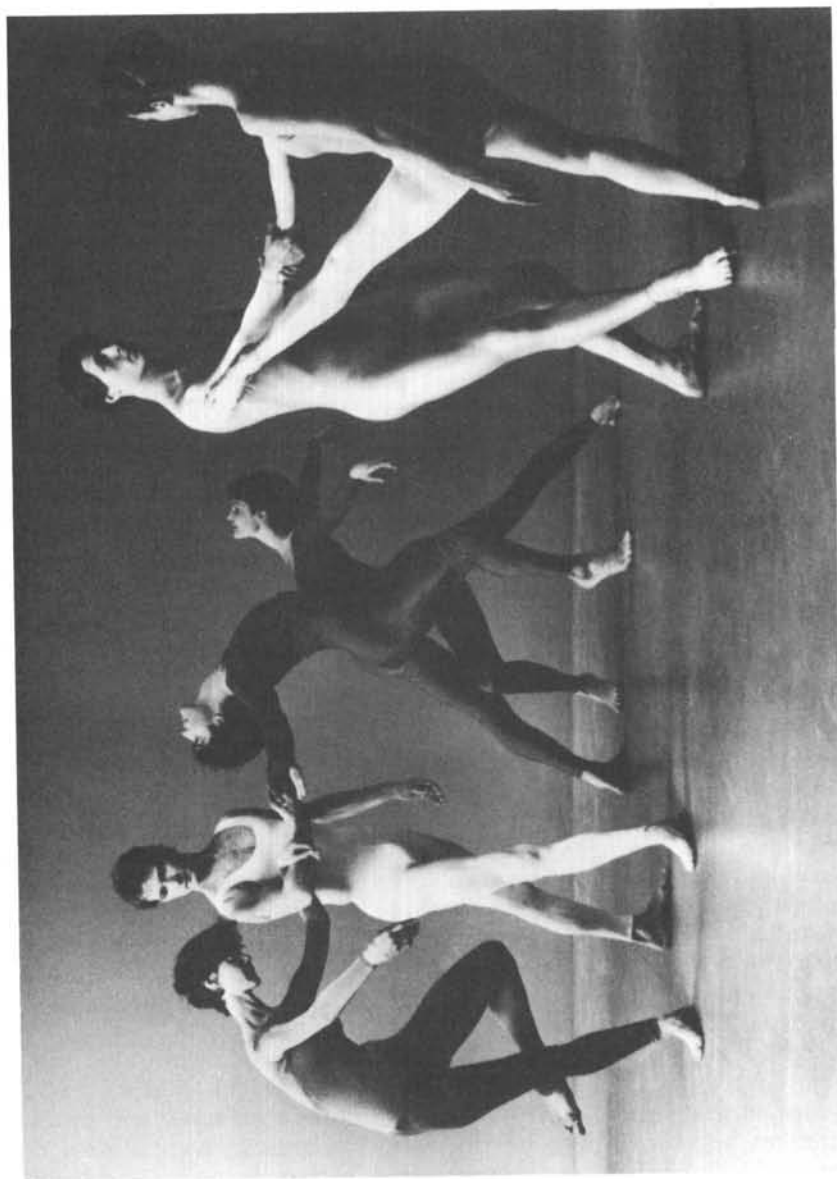


Photo credit: Lois Greenfield

*The Merce Cunningham Dance
Company in "Phrases."*

or leg warmers layered on top. Yet within his own universe, Cunningham has built in the idea of change. Over the twenty years I've been watching, the look and abilities of his dancers have changed and so have the movement, the performing style, and the overall look and sound of the dances. The transformations have always been subtle and I never feel I've seen enough performances in a season to catch them all. He probably intends that too.

The way Cunningham choreography looks is inseparable from the people it's made on—a new Cunningham dance always looks right, and unlike some other dances, Twyla Tharp's for instance, it doesn't seem to decay over time. One reason for this is that Cunningham doesn't keep dances in his repertory for very long. *Locale* (1979) was the oldest piece of the spring season. Virtually everything in current repertory was created on the dancers who are now in the company. They don't come into Cunningham's company and have to learn roles built on other dancers' bodies, always a process with a risk of diffusion and re-interpretation. It shouldn't be so, but our perception of a modern dance is almost locked together with the dancers who create the dance. Subsequent cast members never look quite right to us even if they're very good. In fact, the stronger the new interpretation is, however valid, the less we want to accept it as an alternative. Besides the fact that Cunningham's dances aren't meant to be standing fixtures with parts replaced when needed, his whole method of working puts the dance in the hands of the performer. When a role is filled by a new dancer, the dance itself changes. This season I missed the highly acute, intense presence of Louise Burns, who left the company after many years; but no dance suffered for it. I couldn't even remember what roles used to be hers. Chris Komar, who used to partner her often, had new partners and became himself a rather different force with them.

Cunningham demands an unusual degree of personal decision-making from his dancers during the performance of any dance. It's true that he no longer creates those totally open situations where they had to decide on their own when to enter and exit, or had to follow instructions posted just before curtain time and intended to ensure that they'd emerge onstage with activities around them that they'd never precisely had to deal with before. But he still imposes spontaneity where other choreographers would foster the reassurance that comes from repetition.

He doesn't work to music. He doesn't even work with set scores. The composers of his dances—John Cage, David Tudor, David Behrman and others—don't make traditional structures and developments any more than he does. Instead they create textures of sound on tape or electronic synthesizers, which they alter and patch together during each performance, usually adding in some live sounds—words, vocalizing, hissing, water sloshing around in a shell—as the fancy strikes them. The texture changes gradually and

unpredictably so the dancers can't even use temporal cues, like listening for the third muffled screech.

What they do use is internalized counting systems, but even with this "plot" of the steps in mind, they have to coordinate with each other. For unison work, partnering, and just steering through the traffic, the individual's timing has to mesh with the group. Even slight changes or discrepancies can make movement encounters have different qualities. Catherine Kerr's grave, deliberate way of moving—like a person tasting a foreign substance that might be either nourishing or poisonous—contrasts with Chris Komar's impatient, even precipitate onslaughts.

Cunningham's dances are movement dances, nothing else now, not even game structures or comedies or oblique parables as sometimes they were in the past. The dancers don't have much to go on, and often look as though they're inventing the dance as they go along, not the steps but the reasons for being there and doing them. Sometimes they don't all seem to have the same reasons. For instance, in *Duets* (1980), one of Cunningham's most accessible and consistent dances, members of the six partnerships seem to have quite different relationships to each other and to the audience. Neil Greenberg focuses toward the audience most of the time. His dance is as extroverted as that of a *danseur noble* in a ballet pas de deux, while his partner, Susan Quinn Young, is focused on her own movements and on showing them to him. I'd call her seductive if that didn't seem a really extraneous quality amid the bustle and meditateness of Cunningham's stage. Some of the other *Duets* dancers don't seem to have any intention except to do their steps.

I think this noncommittal idea about where the dancers are is what often makes a Cunningham dance look like dance class. The dancers seem to know they're doing something in public but would prefer not to be seen, an attitude that Gore Vidal (aka Edgar Box), in his great murder mystery *Death in the Fifth Position*, described as "the intensely vacuous expressions of weight-lifters or of those restaurant cooks who scramble eggs in front of plate-glass windows."

Once I started looking at the dancers' focus, some of the dances became quite dramatic. *Pictures* (1984), which has most often been described by critics as a series of poses, became a dance about dividing up the stage space. By periodically balancing and leaning on each other to form different kinds of lineups, sometimes silhouetted by special lighting, the dancers divided the stage into foreground/background. Often someone would be dancing upstage of one of these human barriers, and his or her focus would shrink from the whole area of the stage to the enclosure the others had placed him in. At other times you could see the focus penetrating the barriers, and after a while I could almost predict when a dancer would join with someone else to form a new barrier or when he was about to continue alone even after the barrier broke up. Cunningham's tele-

vision dances have been notable for their handling of the depths of space—horizontal space being less open to the video eye—and I thought *Pictures* was possibly an adaptation of the techniques he has developed there.

The barrier-lineups in *Pictures* were almost the only instances of real dependency I saw in the season. The company now seems a very sympatico but very independent group of loners. Even when they're working most closely together, I feel a sense of isolation. In *Phrases* and *Native Green*, the two newest dances, both of which I saw twice but which I now have somewhat mixed up in my mind, my image is of varying groupings that contain alliances or characterizations which are pretty much the same throughout the dance and give it some anchorage, like Megan Walker and Susan Quinn Young crossing and recrossing the space oblivious to everyone but each other, never resolving their ambiguous relationship.

In *Native Green* people seemed to look at each other without thinking, to touch without a tactile sense, and, when in the closest body contact, to be directing their attention on something, anything, other than their partners. They seemed to touch for reassurance, like blind people in familiar rooms. In this piece Cunningham was exploring the possibilities of the upper body, after devising primarily foot movement for years. The dancers looked uncomfortable, sometimes even dissociated, when trying to wave their arms successively, ripple their torsos, or contract their backs and gesture with their arms in a single phrase.

At the very end of *Native Green*, all six dancers pick up a length of wide rubber industrial tubing that has been lying on the floor, and stand it in an upside-down U. As the curtain comes down they're all hanging onto it, but I couldn't decide whether they were leaning on it or holding it up. I finally decided neither one. The image's very neutrality made a striking finish to the dance.

VERNON YOUNG

Not Yet, Not There

A Passage to India is at the apex of the mounting skepticism that characterized E. M. Forster's view of social relationships as, successively, it is expressed in his novels: the unlikelihood of one individual being reconciled with another; one class with another; one nation with another—one race with another. In this, his last novel, the disparities are further subtilized; each of the principal characters, Fielding the Englishman and Dr. Aziz, the Indian Moslem, is secretly unreconciled to himself. When David Lean decided to film the book by disregarding its pessimistic (or at best, contentious) outcome he sacrificed more than the fitting conclusion. Since he found Forster's inferences (about the future of India) "out of date" in 1985, he had necessarily to falsify the protagonists of the story so that he could manipulate them in his own way. Up to the denouement he got the story right, in its episodic sequence, and he told that story with occasional flashes of brilliance. Yet, if you are familiar with the novel, his film, as a whole, is mistakenly far from the disenchanted spirit of the original.

Fielding is almost completely denatured by Lean's reduced conception. In the novel he is described as "a hard-bitten, good-tempered, intelligent fellow on the verge of middle age, with a belief in education. He did not mind whom he taught; public schoolboys, mental defectives and policemen had all come his way, and he had no objection to adding Indians." Thereby he was at odds with his own caste in India. "Ideas are fatal to caste and he used ideas by that most potent method—interchange." We got very little sense from the film characterization either that Fielding is hard-bitten or that he is prevailingly a man of ideas. He is portrayed as a cheerful extrovert who, to be sure, opposes the prosecution of Dr. Aziz and resigns from his club, but he is given none of the casuistry that assails him in the novel, where he is pretty close to being a surrogate for E. M. Forster.

Despite the warmth of his association with Aziz, he finds himself wondering often if they are really talking about the same thing. " 'I shall not really be intimate with this fellow,' Fielding thought, and then, 'nor with anyone.' That was the corollary. And he had to confess that he didn't really mind, that he was content to help people and like them as long as they didn't object, and if they objected pass on serenely." Yet misgivings for his own reasonableness do linger. "Experience can do much, and all that he had learned in England

and Europe was an assistance to him, and helped him towards clarity, but clarity prevented him from experiencing something else. . . . Fielding felt all his motions were makeshift whereas when the Nawab stretched out his hand for food or Nerredin applauded a song, something beautiful had been accomplished which needed no development."

The absence of a visual equivalent for these reflections leaves the movie Fielding without the dimension that most makes him interesting. Comparably, the same diffidence on Lean's part considerably oversimplifies the Indian, Aziz. Lean seems to have believed that if Aziz was shown as markedly self-contradictory, his role as a subjected member of the British Empire would be vitiated. One of the most footling notions going the rounds today is the fear of analyzing racial differences because to do so is an unwelcome admission that differences exist. Aziz, on the page, is intriguing in a way that he never becomes on the screen. He is more mercurial (not to say confused) than Lean ever permits his actor to be (I'm giving benefit of the doubt to Victor Bannerjee, while wishing Aziz had been played by Ben Kingsley)—and he has refreshing touches of humor which have been ironed out in Lean's script. Nothing is made of his being Islamic, a matter of central importance in his fickle reactions; he is almost as uncomfortable with Hindus as he is with the British.

Forster's key to him is that he was "sensitive rather than responsive. In every remark he found a meaning but not always the true meaning and his life though vivid was largely a dream." He is a relevant example of Fielding's observation that India is less a mystery than a muddle. Flattered by Adela Quested's attention to him, Aziz is shocked at Fielding's firm opinion that she is a prig. "She goes on and on as if she's at a lecture—trying ever so hard to understand India and life, and occasionally taking a note." But when, at the climax of the tale, Miss Quested accuses Aziz of assaulting her at the Marabar caves his sexual vanity is as outraged as his sense of justice.

As a production, *A Passage to India* is impressive from the outset, with that shot of umbrellas in London and a P & O steamship model in the background. Differences of 'climate' is certainly a governing theme and the image serves beside to introduce Adela Quested, buying her passage to India, ostensibly to marry Ronny, the Civil Magistrate, a greater prig than she, whose justification for keeping the natives at arm's length is "We're not pleasant in India and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do." It is Adela's strenuous attempt to *be* pleasant, to *understand*, as Fielding puts it, that precipitates the tragic farce of Aziz's trial. "In her ignorance she regarded him [Aziz] as 'India' and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India." (Fielding's reflection.) After the event, she breaks down in court, confessing that she doesn't know *what* hap-

pened at the Marabar caves. Although Aziz is acquitted, whatever trust he has given to the English is damaged beyond repair; when he hears that Fielding, during an absence in England, has married, he is prepared to believe that the Englishman's wife is that prig, Adela Quested, his personal enemy! In the novel, his friendship with Fielding is never wholly mended.

Lean wanted it otherwise. He lost his nerve. As we are now witnessing an unprecedented effort at political and religious unity in that vast sub-continent, Lean must think it is not sporting to remind anyone of E. M. Forster's doubts in 1924. A silly reservation: the more so as the contemporary scene has nothing to do with British rule in India; the British left India. Lean is simply importing what he feels *ought* to have been their attitude before they left. Evidently, there is a generation or two virtually ignorant, in any detail, of the part England played in governing that country; they are catching up by way of the movies, not the most reliable passage to India or anywhere else; in their eagerness to do so (especially to hear the worst that can be said) they have accepted not only the unfleshed *Gandhi* of Richard Attenborough but also the recent TV adaptation of Paul Scott's four-volume fiction, *The Raj Quartet*. In my opinion the Granada production, *The Jewel in the Crown*, was a drag, with nothing of the distinction attributed to it by a majority of viewers. I found Ken Taylor's adaptation quite confusing in its selection and continuity; the system of using multiple directors guaranteed that there would be no unifying tone; the settings were not imposing until the last few episodes and the editing was erratic from first to last. Peggy Ashcroft has been cited for "a great performance." As she had already played one aging woman wandering around India looking for something to be perplexed about (Mrs. Moore in *A Passage to India*), perhaps she was applauded for her valor in striving for a variant role. She did not give a great performance; greatness was not required for the part. She fitted in, as the others did. Granada has its own triumphs from time to time but BBC obviously has the better writers and the pick of the actors.

In this comparison, Lean's film has an initial advantage, of course; it doesn't take fourteen weeks to sit it through with the consequence of our losing whatever thread of integrity sustains even an outstanding TV enterprise. And to redress the balance of my adverse criticism, I'll acknowledge that Lean does, in many respects, enhance the impact of Forster's narrative. The entire Marabar sequence is very well done and much of its merit is owing to a helpful invention, not in the novel at all. Shortly before the fateful picnic staged by the over-eager Aziz for the English who please him (Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested and Fielding), Adela Quested cycles to a neighboring temple where she is enthralled by an erotic sculpture, Siva embraced by Pavati. Since the girl is alone, her confrontation is naturally a silent one, and it is as much to the credit of that superb

Australian actress, Judy Davis, as it is to the camera editing of her disturbed reactions, that this quietly potent scene is one of the most eloquent in the movie. Further, it supplies the pressure of the girl's awakening sexuality to the later sequence at the caves, an aspect of the subject which, in the book, is never out in the open.

The more is the pity that Lean elsewhere retreated from the full rich treatment that Forster's dialectic of ironies deserved. If nothing else, he robbed us of that fine cluster of metaphors with which the book famously, and you could say cinematically, ends. Friends again but not for long united, Aziz and Fielding go for their last horseback ride together, quibbling, jeering, denouncing one another. In a rage at Fielding's mockery of his vision of a united India (Hindu, Moslem, Sikh), Aziz impatiently cries out.

"Down with the English anyhow. . . . We may hate one another, but we hate you most. . . if it's fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then"—he rode against him furiously—"and then" he concluded, half kissing him, "you and I shall be friends."

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."

But the horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass in single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there."

ROBERT LEITER

Theater Chronicle

HYPERBOLE AS A STAPLE OF DRAMA CRITICISM is nothing new, and the nearly unanimous praise that has greeted David Rabe's *Hurlyburly* is a prime example of the phenomenon. The play is by no means "a powerful permanent contribution to American drama"; rather, it is overly long, unconvincing, muddled in thought and filled with bombastic language masquerading as the height of realistic speech. Yet what is most frustrating about the work is that lurking beneath the tiresome rhetoric is a fine idea for a play that Rabe (and, by extension, his director Mike Nichols) refuses to face.

The scene is a house in the Hollywood Hills shared by two casting agents, Eddie and Mickey, both of whom are divorced. Eddie is a long-winded fellow, given to philosophical pronouncements, who "does" every imaginable kind of drug and ends his days falling asleep in front of the TV. Mickey is a more cynical type who tries, with little success, to enlighten his friend. Like the rest of the people in the play, Mickey dabbles in what he calls "a variety of pharmaceutical experiments," but only when it pleases him. He takes a dim view of Eddie's obvious dependence.

The two men are visited off and on by two friends, who are meant to represent other crass male types. Phil, a TV actor relegated by his looks and lack of talent to playing bit parts in cop shows, is repellently macho and faintly psychotic in his penchant for violence. When the play opens, he has left his wife, but not before he has brutally beaten her. Artie, an "idea" man for the movies, though a far more benign presence than Phil, does not, in his pigish way, have anything good to say about women.

This is by no means an unpromising collection of Hollywood riff-raff; and if Rabe had stuck to what seemed, in the early scenes, to be the point behind his play—an examination of male boorishness and sexual avarice—then he might have written a dark comedy of contemporary manners. He knows what ails these men—that they analyze their behavior endlessly, that they speak in psycho-babble and that no matter how self-aware they may seem they are forever deluding themselves. This is Rabe's one stroke of brilliant social criticism and the best scenes in *Hurlyburly* are anchored in this perception.

But with the introduction of the play's female characters we realize that Rabe's intent is something else again. These women are as empty and insipid as their male counterparts—perhaps even more

so—and it's a wonder that a contingent of feminists hasn't picketed the theater. Darlene, a would-be photojournalist, is a vapid good-looker who becomes involved first with Eddie, then with Mickey, then with Eddie again. Donna is a young, midwestern hippie, a real throwback to the sixties, who is astonishingly casual about drugs and sex. Artie "gives" her to Mickey and Eddie as a "care package"; it seems she was "living" in the elevator of Artie's apartment building. Now she is willing to have sex with Eddie and Mickey as a fair trade for a few day's food and lodging. Then there's Bonnie, a divorced mother who works nights as a stripper—she bumps and grinds with balloons—while the rest of the time supporting herself as some sort of new wave hooker.

By adding these characters to his cast, Rabe shows he doesn't want to write merely an indictment of male insensitivity; he's after something bigger. By the second act, it's an indictment of the emptiness at the heart of our society and by act three it's the emptiness of life itself. Yet he hasn't quite figured out who or what is to blame. Is it men, women, drugs, TV? Or is it all of these things, *and* the dreadful loneliness of being a mere speck in the cosmos?

The major stumbling block is that ninety-eight percent of the play is hot air. Rabe would rather talk his theme to death than dramatize it. He has expended most of his energy on Eddie, who is rarely offstage. The character's philosophical ruminations, which Rabe seems at first to be satirizing, become by act three the core of the play's "statement" about life. But we're never cued in on when to stop looking at Eddie as a pompous ass. And to make matters worse, we've lost interest in him long before we're asked to take him seriously.

Rabe has never been much of a thinker, nor the most skillful of technicians. In *Hurlyburly*, when he wants to say something profound he brings the play to a dead stop and lets his dialogue nudge us in the ribs, just so we won't miss the point. Did you know, by the way, that we are all rushing headlong to our deaths? There is no rule, of course, that a playwright has to have a splendidly analytical mind. And there are many powerful plays that aren't tidy ones. There is only one prerequisite—that a writer tell the truth as he sees it. In this respect, Rabe trips himself up again and again. He wishes to show how his characters delude themselves through language—that they know what they are saying but not what it means—and yet he has no conception of how these people really speak.

In one of Eddie and Phil's first exchanges, all of which are filled with expletives, Eddie stops to explain a phrase by saying it's a syllogism. I have never heard anyone use that word in everyday conversation, let alone just after calling someone's estranged wife "a fucking bitch." "Don't get clandestine on me" and "Relent, I beg you" are only two examples of Rabe's tin ear and his obvious need to shore up his play with florid, literary touches. These lapses make

one question the use of profanity in the play. No one would doubt that these people talk this way. But Rabe hasn't found the mechanism behind this kind of language. With the exception of one scene, there is no poetry, bitterness, anger or hopelessness in these obscenities. And so they seem remarkably gratuitous, a bow to "realism" that is at heart all window dressing.

I saw the play late in its run, after it had moved from off-Broadway's Promenade Theatre to the Ethel Barrymore on Broadway. Though Mike Nichols was still listed as director, the production seemed uncharacteristically inept. The curtain goes up on Tony Walton's appropriately ugly set; but for all its veracity it soon comes to represent the lack of imagination that has gone into the whole enterprise. The walls of Eddie and Mickey's house are transparent so that we can see the tall, thick foliage that surrounds the place menacingly. Here we have the play in a nutshell: It's a jungle out there, folks. And, of course, it's a jungle inside, too.

Gauging audience reaction can be a dangerously unfair way of assessing a play. But a curious thing happened the afternoon I saw *Hurlyburly*. The most dramatic moment comes in the third act. Eddie and Darlene are having a tiff. The phone rings, and Eddie is told that Phil, his violent friend, has died in a car accident. Both actors strained to look pale and shocked. Then, from the back of the orchestra, a woman's voice said, with real exasperation, "Thank God!" I felt sorry for the actors, who froze. But clearly the woman spoke for many other disgruntled souls in the audience, and she got the biggest laugh of the afternoon.

The language in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*—whether spoken or sung—is one of this fine first play's strong points. August Wilson is a poet as well as a playwright and the street patois he has devised for his characters sounds absolutely right. But even more unusual, he has conceived his play both as realism and metaphor (the title announces this predisposition) and both imaginative levels work without betraying one another. We believe what we see and hear, and it all resonates.

Like *Hurlyburly*, this play has little in the way of a plot. Ma Rainey, one of the great black jazz singers of the twenties, comes to a Chicago recording studio with her musicians, cuts a new album, then leaves. That is all. But Wilson has had the good sense to see that by sticking to these practical, very real matters in his characters' everyday lives, he could, without straining for effect, say a good deal about race relations in America.

Sturdyvant, the man who owns the recording studio, is of course white, as is Ma's manager. They are Wilson's least believable characters (he also trots in an Irish cop for a brief scene). These men are prejudiced and exploitative of black talent and are never taken by Wilson any farther than this point. Fortunately, they have less to do with the play proper than the black characters (though Sturdyvant

is instrumental, in a regrettably artificial way, in the play's unconvincing final scenes).

The set, a good one by Charles Henry McClennahan, is divided into two parts. The recording studio is on the left and the basement rehearsal room to the right, and this is a perfect visual equivalent of how the play works. The action alternates between scenes of the recording session with Ma and the rehearsals and conversations among her four male musicians. The counterpoint is never schematic, always subtle and evocative.

For the most part, Lloyd Richards' production, which began at his Yale Repertory Company, is a forceful realization of Wilson's text. Theresa Merritt, as Ma, is regal. She commands the stage—as well she should—and is a marvelous singer besides. One wouldn't mind hearing her sing on and on into the night. (The musical numbers are all magical and far too limited.) Joe Seneca, who plays Cutler, Ma's trombonist, has the same ease and proficiency as Merritt and like her gives us the impression that he is making up his lines on the spot. Robert Judd and Leonard Jackson, as Toledo the pianist and Slow Drag the bassist, although not on a par with Merritt and Seneca, are very good indeed.

The only flaw in the cast is Charles S. Dutton as the trumpeter Levee. It is not surprising to learn from the Playbill that Dutton is a recent graduate of the Yale School of Drama. He hasn't the technical maturity of his fellow actors, and often Richards has allowed him to play his part, the most substantial and flashiest of the four men, far too broadly. A bit more discipline and subtlety might have helped us over the faults in the author's conception of the character.

It is Levee who brings the play to its unfortunate melodramatic finale; by then we have realized that the character's long speeches have been grafted onto the action to justify his murderous rage. In this respect, Wilson lacked the courage to let the metaphor at the heart of his play guide him. Apparently, he felt obligated to "create" a plot, and all his maneuvering seems to come straight out of some textbook idea of character motivation and play construction. Both acts are marred by too many broad comic moments and there is some unnecessary underlining of the play's theme throughout. All the talk of the "white man" and his oppression—when, like *Hurlyburly*, the action just stops—is superfluous because the play, simply by "being," dramatizes the idea. Wilson should have trusted his metaphorical imagination more and used the blues to comment on the action. But this would have made the play less old-fashioned in design, perhaps harsher, more Brechtian, less willing to satisfy the expectations of a Broadway audience.

But these are minor faults. *Ma Rainey* plays exceedingly well, and Wilson is to be commended for his economy of means. Unlike *Hurlyburly*, *Ma Rainey*, despite some lapses in judgment, hasn't an ounce of fat on it.

DEAN FLOWER

Fiction Chronicle

BERNARD MACLAVERTY'S NEW COLLECTION OF STORIES will delight anyone who admires (and who would not?) the beautiful concision of his two novels, *Lamb* and *Cal*.¹ And besides, the stories are funnier and more fabulous than anything of his published in this country before. In one a worried adolescent prays so fervently about passing his exams that he levitates a full foot and a half above his desk. A man who has been drinking heavily all day gets aboard the "Hurricane Waltzer" in an amusement park, turns queasy, and soon bespatters the whole region. "There's not a spot of boke on him," says an awed observer afterwards. Many of these stories are mere anecdotes and sketches, yet MacLavery exercises such care in everything he writes that even the slightest of them is rewarding. "A Rat and Some Renovations" recounts the farcical struggle of a mother to fix up her kitchen—and rid herself of a pest—before some American relatives come to visit.

She called me and said, "What's those?" I looked and saw six hard brown ovals trundling about the drawer.
"Ratshit," I said.

Yet when the Yanks arrive in her freshly-renovated kitchen, Ma carries it all off bravely, "untacking her hand from the paint on the drawer" and claiming, "'Yeah, we done it up last year.'" Only a true craftsman would set those ovals "trundling about" or link up the drawer again in the final gesture.

Irrepressible humor is an important quality of even the grimmest stories MacLavery has to tell, and in this he differs from his evident masters in the form, Joyce in *Dubliners* and Hemingway in *In Our Time*. Echoes of both writers may be discerned in "The Exercise," about a boy whose father gives him all the answers in his Latin assignment, and all the answers were wrong. The boy's palms are savagely caned by his Latin instructor, but the decision is not to tell his father, a common barman who might have done better in life. Pleased with himself ("Son, your Da's a genius"), the father affectionately "smacked him with the paper" and the boy "slipped his hand into the warmth of his father's overcoat pocket, deep to the elbow."

¹ SECRETS AND OTHER STORIES, by Bernard MacLavery. Viking. \$13.95.

MacLaverty has a distinct gift for anti-climax and reversals of fate, as if to say that not all life's jokes have to be at our expense. In "St. Paul Could Hit the Nail on the Head" an already beleaguered mother goes through the tedious ordeal of a visit from her elderly cousin, Father Malachy, who has nothing better to do than stare at the opposite wall "as if it were a TV programme." But her annoyance dissolves when she takes a furtive glimpse into the contents of his suitcase and recognizes the full pathos of his life. In "Anodyne" a man trying to recover from the shock of his mother's death hopes to find romance at the seashore. He ends up happily discussing literature with the father of the girl he had imagined wooing. In "Umberto Verdi, Chimney Sweep" a mother tries to find some romantic margin in her life by choosing a new chimney sweep on the basis of his exotic name. This sympathetically foolish gamble brings her no Italian lover, but at least the chimney works: "there wasn't a pick of soot or dirt anywhere."

In the less successful stories MacLaverty's attempts at consistent grimness fail to convince. The death of a dog ("Where the Tides Meet"), the swimming pool drowning of a boy ("The Deep End"), and the quandaries of an alienated husband ("Between Two Shores") all ask us to feel volumes of emotion beneath the objective surface. The appeal is more than a bit like Hemingway's formula, and it does not quite work. *Inconsistent* grimness is what seems right for MacLaverty. In the extremely funny "The Miraculous Candidate" the converse of the principle applies: we can still hover tellingly over a teacher with "a bad foot and some sort of high boot which squeaked every time he took a step." Or in "The Exercise" even the villainous Latin instructor is brought to life dispassionately: "When he had finished [writing on the board] he would set the chalk down and rub the used finger and thumb together with the same action he used after handling the host over the paten." MacLaverty's best stories are Joycean, not only because they are so neatly mortised and tenoned but because they resound at just the right moments with stylistic elegance. One may compare the powerful last lines of Joyce's "Araby" with this no less effective ending of MacLaverty's "Secrets": "Tears came into his eyes for the first time since she had died and he cried silently into the crook of his arm for the woman who had been his maiden aunt, his teller of tales, that she might forgive him."

Edna O'Brien is always happiest when the story she has to tell begins and ends in wretchedness. That is her home territory, and as the recent selection of her twenty-nine best stories attests, she has long travelled it with authority.² O'Brien's is a distinctive kind of wretchedness, compounded of the Irish exile's bitterness and the divorced woman's disillusionment, where the experience of being be-

² A FANATIC HEART, by Edna O'Brien. Farrar Straus & Giroux. \$17.95.

trayed is always countered by feeling oneself as the betrayer. O'Brien's title is drawn from Yeats's "Remorse for Intemperate Speech," with the relevant passage given in an epigraph: "Out of Ireland have we come. / Great hatred, little room, / Maimed us at the start. / I carry from my mother's womb / A fanatic heart." Like many another exile O'Brien seems to have learned that the intemperate anger was a type of love, and that the place and its people were not easily left behind. As one of her more recent characters recalls, "Only one thing was uppermost in me and it was flight, and in my fancies I had no idea that no matter how distant the flight or how high I soared, those people were entrenched in me."

In almost every story the autobiographic mode prevails. Whether O'Brien tells of a loony bachelor or a beautiful nun or a hoydenish Australian, there is always a narrator to remember and reflect them through her own experience of growing up in the villages and farms of western Ireland. Something ballad-like is felt: whole lives are encompassed, often a novel's worth of experience, in a summary narrative that leaps and lingers over the years. "The Rose of New York" spans the history of a woman's love for her mother, from birth agonies through fierce dependencies to final alienations and death. "A Scandalous Woman" treats the history of the narrator's friendship with a girl who experiments disastrously in love, charting the successive stages of distancing between them. O'Brien does not favor epiphanies, the lethal close or quick ironic twist so commonly found in shorter stories. Her recollective manner is always ready to conjure up more, letting one thing lead to another, and another. The onrushing rhythm of this is often wonderful:

I used to go over there to play, and though they were older than me, they used to beg me to come and bribe me with empty spools or scraps of cloth for my dolls. Sometimes we played hide-and-seek, sometimes we played families and gave ourselves posh names and posh jobs, and we used to paint each other with the dye from plants or blue bags and treat one another's faces as if they were palettes, and then laugh and marvel at the blues and indigos and pretend to be natives and do hula-hula and eat dock leaves.

Style is never allowed to be decorative or ingenious or obtrusive with O'Brien. If her precisely-noted details sometimes become metaphoric or symbolic, that is made to seem only natural, inherent in the material. In this she resembles Frank O'Connor more than any other Irish writer. They both labor to achieve an unaffectedly clear speaking voice, and would persuade you there's no trick to it at all. "We had all returned from our long summer holiday and we were all wretched," she writes in "Sister Imelda," a fine story of a teaching nun who has chosen against a promising career. The narrator

remembers her own intense longings for intimacy with the affectionate but elusive sister, and in the process—as if incidentally—conveys the abysmal loneliness of the nun. As a mere afterthought the narrator mentions “her nun’s silver ring slipped easily and sometimes unavoidably off her marriage finger. It occurred to me that she was having a nervous breakdown.”

There are more richly evocative moments than these, of course, but they are still underplayed. In “A Scandalous Woman” we find an exquisite moment of youthful friendship, dramatized by the gift of a bottle of perfume and an exchange of kisses, all treated with a fine leisurely sensuousness and then expertly drawn to a close: “That moment had an air of mystery and sanctity about it, what with the surprise and our speechlessness, and a realization somewhere in the back of my mind that we were engaged in murky business indeed and that our larking days were over.”

In recent years O’Brien has acquired an unfortunate reputation as A Woman’s Writer. Friendly female critics praise her for championing their cause; hostile male critics categorize her as “an expert in female passivity” or as “narrow” and “obsessive.” Now it cannot be denied that the sufferings of women figure everywhere in O’Brien’s work, and occasionally a direct comment surfaces. One story concludes (atypically), “ours indeed was a land of shame, a land of murder, and a land of strange, throttled, sacrificial women.” But O’Brien never coerces her subject into a cause. Expert at figuring the lives of women who are wretched, she does not address the Wretchedness of Woman. Her weaker stories tend to be about dissociated modern women out of touch with themselves and the past. “The Love Object” and “Paradise” are about such women, and the narrative turns in upon itself in a way that collapses perspective. O’Brien gets too close to the present here perhaps, too close to the way she lives now, and the details fail to reverberate. But in the recollective mode her whole world opens up: the anguish of fending off an unwanted Romeo (“Courtship”), the anti-climax of a drunken party (“Irish Revel”), the illusions of worldly life (“The Connor Girls”), the return of the unwanted native (“Savages”). Here the voice seems unerring and all the details count.

Carolyn Chute’s first novel, a scraggly chronicle of the miseries of the Bean family (no relation to the mail-order outfitters) of Egypt, Maine, has been given a big play by its publishers and first reviewers.³ Ticknor and Fields sent out excerpts from Chute’s homespun correspondence with her editors (“I look like a 200 pound cabbage patch doll,” she writes, or “Sometimes I think I swallow house keys and things in my sleep”). *The New York Times* told her highly entertaining rags to rags story under the headline “A Life of Poverty Becomes Art.” Obviously the combination of pawky humor and a grim

³ THE BEANS OF EGYPT, MAINE, by Carolyn Chute. Ticknor & Fields. \$7.95p.

past makes for good copy. What it all has to do with art is another question.

Most of the story comes from Earlene, the more or less ordinary little girl across the road who is spellbound by all the fecund slovenliness of Beandom: logging rigs roaring in and out, yards full of junk and look-alike kids, monstrous dogs, tar paper, laundry. Earlene grows up as the story progresses, crosses the road, gets raped, and joins the clan. Her language implausibly does not change. It contains colloquialisms even when she is not speaking (*suppah*, *wat-chin'*, *patatahs*), the use of all caps at whim ("I mutter, 'Well . . . I just ain't *ever* gonna leave THIS HOLE'"), lots of sound effects ("the ernk! of the gears"), and too much studied poetic imagery ("Dirt sifts down from the ceiling through the enormous light," Earlene will say, or "In this broad, daylight-blue, noisy night Bonny Loo's face is twisting out a word." Sez who? Only five of the novel's eleven chapters are narrated by Earlene, but the others sound the same. The result is a studied but inconsistent naiveté. Still, the raw hyperbole is sometimes fun:

His nails are dirty, chewed up. The pimples on his face are like volcanoes gettin' ready to bust and drown the world. In school under them lights, all Beans are purple. You sit next to a Bean, you can smell their hot black upright hair giving off the smell of a kerosene stove. I think if you tossed a match at a Bean, they'd burst into flame.

One hears a real barbaric yawp in this, but why *gettin'* followed by *giving*?

Apart from the mesmerized Earlene, there are three focal characters: Rubie Bean (Reuben to the police), the meanest maverick logger-trucker in Maine and prototype of the herd; Beal Bean, a shambling stuttering bear of a boy-man, virtual clone of Rubie to look at; and Roberta Bean, statuesque and independent as a pine tree, mother or mistress or both to almost anyone around. The novel works to make these fairy-tale figures more angry, awesome, damned, doomed, and noble than they were in the first place. In spite of fabulous events the story has no particular momentum or issue. Chute has got hold of one firm principle, that the downtrodden poor feed upon their pride and anger like drug addicts. Beside them, she tries to show, the rest of the world looks puny and insignificant. It might have worked had she been able to show she knew *something* of the rest of the world. On the dust jacket the publisher offers this defense: "If Chute's method is primitive, it could not be otherwise for she is dealing with primitive matters." But that too is a poor argument, excusing a groping and uncertain craft because it seems more honest and sincere. That way lies condescension and sentimentality. Chute is not qualified to write about poverty merely

because she has lived it. And I wonder how many women will be able to share the author's enthusiasm for the male Bean sexual stereotype, with its absolute selfishness, greed, and stench. Nevertheless, Chute is possessed of an unusual voice and a saving sense of humor; these may see her through to a greater achievement. She has promised her next novel will be about "life in a junkyard." "I used to spend time there eavesdropping," she writes. "It's a great place."

Linda Anderson writes of her native Belfast and the terrible pains of its civil strife in her impressive first novel.⁴ Well-received in both Ireland and England last year, it has been slighted in this country. Anderson managed to avoid a working-class fate by studying French and philosophy at Queen's University in Belfast, and then escaping to London. The novel constructs the life she might have known had she remained in Belfast now: the rage and humiliation and despair over the occupation, the endless poverty, the suspicion and betrayal on all sides, the erosions of belief, the nightmare of futile retaliations and deaths. Anderson might easily have placed a version of herself at the center of this story. It involves Rosaleen, who has married young and hastily, her husband Dan, who is a medical student, and their infant son. Rosaleen would have had a hard life even without being caught in the crossfire of the Brits and the IRA. But the novel is blessedly not focused on Rosaleen alone. Of its twenty-two chapters, only seven present her point of view. This not only deflects emphasis from what could have been a sentimental part of the plot—Rosaleen's involvement with a British soldier—but enforces a sympathetic treatment of Dan. The novel begins and ends with his point of view, nine chapters in all. Further displacing Rosaleen from the center are five chapters located in the rather likeable consciousness of the soldier, Gerry.

Anderson gets inside each of these minds vividly. The dialogue is all terse and bitter. The thoughts rushing through the characters' minds tend likewise to be harsh. Rosaleen frequently implodes in a throttled resentment, for example when she sees her father react to the bloody beating given to her foolish younger brother Leo:

He broke into tears, his face stricken and tender with love, and reached out to hold Leo's head.

Rosaleen fled from the house as soon as possible, unable to bear what she had seen. He loved Leo! Well, she hated him! Leo with his burned legs and battered face! She knew her father would not care if anything happened to *her*.

Another time she glances up at a picture of Jesus and is suddenly awash in hatred: "A righteous prig blasting fig-trees, turfing mon-

⁴ WE CAN'T ALL BE HEROES, YOU KNOW, by Linda Anderson. Ticknor & Fields. \$14.95.

ey-lenders out of the temple," she thinks scornfully. "Love your enemies! Not that he forgave his opponents." Rosaleen feels sorry for Pilate: "What could he have done?" Dan's more introverted and self-doubting character presents a different challenge, but Anderson rises to it convincingly, detailing his worry over debt, his hurt pride at Rosaleen's mourning a dead friend ("It was like some subtle attack on him. Wasn't his love enough? Wasn't he there?"), his times of cowardice and double-edged blame, the fierce self-discipline of his ambition in conflict with his need for love, his self-pity mixed with shame for yielding to it. Dan is no hero, of course, just a palpably believable character.

Anderson is also impressive in taking us inside the barracks of the British soldiers. Henry James famously argued in 1884 that a young lady could indeed write a novel of garrison life if she were "one upon whom nothing is lost," and now a hundred years later Anderson has proved it literally: weaponry, military jargon, profanity, interrogations, the contents of foot-lockers—she handles it all without hesitation. Here is Gerry standing guard duty, "soaked with sweat" after hours of tension: "Every sense was focused in eyes and ears and gun. All feeling was lost in his arms and legs. He itched to press the trigger, to hear the sharp detonation, feel the kick against his shoulder." In another chapter Anderson even dares to enter the mind of Gerry's commanding officer, a captain who thinks "the Northern Ireland theater" is "in overall terms, very small beer indeed." This turns out to be the novelist's only poor decision. Anderson's contempt for the military mentality is so categorical that her treatment can only be a caricature. The mentality may well *be* a caricature, but it did not need to be imagined from within in this otherwise splendidly dispassionate novel.

Manuel Puig may be the most original and consistently innovative of all the many experimental novelists working in Spanish these days. Unlike most of his South American contemporaries, who seem to have been spawned by Faulkner, Puig has deeper affinities with European novelists and filmmakers, especially Robbe-Grillet, Resnais, Kundera, and Godard. Like them, Puig is interested in the way memory, politics, sex, and language are exploited to revise and reconstruct our versions of reality. Puig left his native Argentina in 1956 to study film in Rome, and he currently lives in New York. His latest novel is another dazzling *tour de force*, both a book-length dramatic monologue and a kind of philosophical inquiry into the dialectics of narrative self-invention.⁵

At the surface the action consists of an apparent dialogue between Josemar Ferreira, a swaggering belligerent bastard of a contractor who works in Rio, and a woman he once tried to love in a rural village, Maria da Gloria Rossi. She (or her disembodied voice)

⁵ BLOOD OF REQUITED LOVE, by Manuel Puig. Translated by Jan L. Grayson. Random House. \$7.95p.

interrogates him about their aborted love, when was it, who else was he seeing, what really happened. Her abrupt queries and Josemar's lengthy defensive and egotistical replies lead to the telling and re-telling of his whole life. Everything he says reeks of the dishonest and the self-serving, of bullying and crude stereotyping. He ends his sentences with "do you understand what I'm saying?" and "is that clear?" and "you know?" and "right?" He likes to begin sentences with "So here's how it was" and "The situation is as follows." He also favors a lot of timeless vulgarity—*hell, fucking, shit*—and the currently popular phrase, "no problem." With repetition all these devices have an effect precisely opposite to the one consciously intended. It quickly becomes apparent that the dialogue is a monologue, that Maria's voice is within him, that the confident Josemar is riddled with doubts and anxieties, and that all his labyrinthine tellings and re-tellings of his life are a pathetic attempt to make it into something it wasn't, something he can bear to think about. But his memory both will and then will not let him do this with an easy conscience.

Borges (another Argentine expatriate, as it happens) once described memory as an endless succession of images, like a stack of coins, each one further removed from the original experience: "So that every time I recall something, I'm not recalling it really, I'm recalling the last time I recalled it." Puig seems to have this principle very much in mind. His protagonist is not only an unsuccessful builder in Rio but a frustrated constructor and deconstructor of his own past. Repeatedly he attempts to return to the emblematic scenes of his life, but each time he only encounters a previous fiction, which he can only replace with another. It seems that he did make love to the virginal Maria, whose bleeding was traumatic to him, but where it all took place (at least three versions are given) and more important how he actually felt about it at the time he cannot decide. Ultimately the novel is about Josemar's unacknowledged desire to escape or remake himself. The plain prose of it all is that he lives in a dismal suburb with his elderly mother, commutes a weary distance to the city, works at least six days a week without let-up, and has failed to love anyone. Despite all its technical austerity, this novel still makes us feel the bars of Josemar's cage as he fairly screams at us. The situation is as follows: what the hell does he care about the past, right? No problem.

Don DeLillo is an entertaining writer, and there are many choice bits in his most recent novel, but it remains a patchwork affair with a threadbare plot and bad case of pseudo-solemnity.⁶ DeLillo clearly has a gift for seizing upon the current and fashionable in American folkways, and holding up the latest specimens for our amused inspection. His favorite *mises en scènes* are supermarkets, shopping malls, cars stuck in motionless traffic, families clustered around tele-

⁶ WHITE NOISE, by Don DeLillo. Viking. \$16.95.

visions, and college classrooms. All these provide nice opportunities to suggest the latent surrealism of well-fed Americans going about their bland business. Like many another student of our jargon, DeLillo keeps his ear to the ground, listening for the godawful. A typical specimen: the mild professorial lunatic (of the American Studies persuasion) who decides to give a seminar on the "cinema of car crashes." Another: under the headline "Life After Death Guaranteed with Bonus Coupons" a newspaper story reports that Dr. Shiv Chatterjee, a "fitness guru and high energy physicist," has documented a case of two women who claim to have been twin sisters in the lost city of Atlantis: "Both women describe the city . . . as a clean and well-run municipality where you could walk safely almost any time of day or night." They are now "food stylists" for NASA. Another sample: an elderly couple disappear completely for days, then are found "alive but shaken" in an empty "cookie shack" in the huge Village Mall outside of town.

Another dimension of the novel is its affectionate rendition of your typical American family—extended version. Jack Gladney, our narrator, has been through several marriages and so has his wife Babette, thus accumulating a good miscellany of children. My favorite is Heinrich, the solemn scientific teenager who plays chess by mail with a convict and traps his father in more than one *reductio ad absurdum*. I also liked the pubertal Denise, who constantly wears a green eye-shade and studies a medical encyclopedia. Family discussions are full of such realistic exchanges as "I'll give anyone in this car five dollars . . . if they can name the population of Bolivia." "Bolivians," someone says. Another authentic genre scene has them all crowded into the family car, each eating a finger lickin' good supper in completely self-absorbed silence.

DeLillo's grand theme in this novel is death anxiety, which he dramatizes as the "white noise" of our lives. But he offers only an accumulation of episodes, anecdotes, monologues, set-pieces and one-liners with which to develop the subject. Jack Gladney is glib, his funny New York intellectual friend Murray is glib, Heinrich is glib, a spooky woman in chemical research turns out to be glib, and after a while they all begin to sound alike. As credibility erodes, the tone becomes prevailingly flippant. The pilot of a plane supposedly hurtling toward disaster announces to the horrified passengers over the intercom, "They will find our bodies in some smoking field, strewn about in the grisly attitudes of death. I love you, Lance." At such moments—and there are many—I suspect the author of trying to be Woody Allen. It is not a ringing success.

You know you will like Anita Brookner's latest novel as soon as her protagonist, the normally very reticent Edith Hope, launches into an eloquent commentary on the tortoise-and-hare myth.⁷ "People love this one," she says, "especially women":

⁷ HOTEL DU LAC, by Anita Brookner. Pantheon. \$13.95.

"In real life, of course, it is the hare who wins. Every time. Look around you. And in any case it is my contention that Aesop was writing for the tortoise market. . . . Hares have no time to read. They are too busy winning the game."

Edith is a writer of romances about "the mouse-like unassuming girl who gets the hero" in the end. But whether Edith is a mouse in a novel like that or a tortoise defeated by the hares are questions that provide much entertainment in this very reticent, unassuming novel.

Edith has come for an indeterminate time to a Swiss hotel near Montreux, to work on her next novel, to get away from London. She calls it "this tiny exile" and an effort at "clearing the decks." Unwilling to explain herself, she chooses the Hotel du Lac as a place of refuge and reflection. It is also conspicuously a place of writing: she works dutifully on her next romance, *Beneath the Visiting Moon*, a "daily task of fantasy and obfuscation"; she writes long letters to David, her securely married lover back in London; and, figuratively, she tries to write at least a plot outline for the rest of her life. Two narratives emerge: her gradual involvement with the few remaining guests in the off-season hotel, and her gradual recovery of willingness to think over the past. Brookner remains absolutely poised in releasing the details of her interesting story, and for all its low-keyed inching along I found it full of suspense and surprise. Why is it that the English are so good at these things?

Brookner's manner is just about irresistible, with its unruffled clarity and glints of irony and amusement. We learn that Edith Hope writes her fiction "under a more thrusting name." A tall elderly woman has "the narrow nodding head of a grebe." The hotel manager reacts to a dog's piddling on the stairs with "a momentary closing of the eyes and a quick snap of the fingers," before conveying to Edith his "dissociation from the misdemeanours of animals and, more important, from those unwise enough to harbour them." Apple trees in the background display "fruit sparkling with emblematic significance." Pleasure and assurance can be felt in every line, as if the telling were all simply effortless fun. Having at a moment's notice ditched a husband-to-be, Edith opens the window of her taxi and gives "delighted attention to the little boys playing football, and the heavy girls thumping up and down on horseback, and the tourists peering at their maps and, presumably, asking the way to Harrod's."

There's a trace of Jamesian quandering in the way Edith guesses and imagines the lives of her fellow hotel guests. This is particularly effective when Edith must continually revise her impressions of the rich widow Iris Pusey (*how old?*) and her demure—but rather ample—daughter Jennifer (*how demure?*). Certain moments suggest *What Maisie Knew* or *The Sacred Fount*. Hearing a screech, Edith

rushes across the hall to be presented with a late Victorian vignette. First she sees that “Jennifer herself, the straps of a satin nightgown slipping from her plump shoulders, laughing and uttering little moans, was poised on her bed, her legs drawn up.” Then she sees Mrs. Pusey “in a pale pink silk kimono,” standing in the doorway, “her hand to her mouth.” Then in the corner, crouching, she sees the enigmatic gentleman Mr. Neville doing something odd and unintelligible. The explanation—Jennifer has always been terrified of spiders—does not fully explain what Edith saw. Brookner is equally subtle with those seemingly accidental repetitions of words, little verbal coincidences, that certain authors delight in teasing their protagonists with. For example Edith hears in the night, half-asleep, a door closing. In the next paragraph, her mind elsewhere, the depressed Edith tells herself, “do not think. Close doors.” Or having described her own heroines as “mouse-like” Edith will discover with a shock of revulsion that some man she imagined loving is the epitome of “mouse-like seamliness.” But the beauty of this sort of ingenuity in Brookner’s hands is its seeming artlessness. Like so much else in this fine novel, it’s unobtrusive.

To the rapidly growing list of Anglo-Indian writers everyone should read—Naipaul, Jhabvala, Markandaya, Rushdie—must now be added Anita Desai. She has written ten books since 1963. *Clear Light of Day* (1980) deserved all its praise, and her latest novel is even better.⁸ It tells the sad and funny story of Deven, a wretchedly poor university instructor in Mirepore, just outside Delhi. Deven struggles to teach Hindi poetry to masses of unwilling, even jeering students, for he is the sort of powerless person others seem instinctively to abuse. Deven’s first love is Urdu poetry, because that was his first language “in the half-forgotten, unsubstantial city of childhood,” but Urdu literature and language are fast disappearing now, and he must teach Hindi to survive. He has a wife and child to support as well. Out of the blue he gets a chance to interview the greatest Urdu poet who ever lived, the sublime Nur. The novel tells the story of Deven’s impassioned quest to reach his idol and record his wisdom. It is a tale of anguish, muddle, and failure—as perhaps any realistic story of the poor in modern India must be—but it is also steeped in heart-rending comedy.

Desai hands over most of the narration to her fallible hero, but at the beginning her voice may be heard decisively sketching in the grim setting. The irony here is not a matter of words:

If one enquired, one might be told that a bright pink and white concrete structure with a newly-painted clay idol and fluorescent tubes for lights was five hundred years old; not strictly true of

⁸ IN CUSTODY, by Anita Desai. Harper & Row. \$16.95.

course but when one considered that its site might have been used for prayer that long, it was not all that false either.

Desai's world is full of such contradictions and ambiguities. Had she remained the teller I think the novel would have sounded gloomy indeed. She speaks of Mirepore's "addiction to total dehydration" and relishes saying that nobody could make "permanent what had remained through the centuries so stubbornly temporary." It is the gullible Deven who makes the story go. He will have nothing to do with paradox and contradiction. He means only to serve the poetic ideal of Nur. But of course the world keeps selling him those five hundred year old fluorescent tubes.

One of the best sequences in the novel concerns the purchase of a tape recorder, so that Nur's legendary voice may be heard by all posterity. Never mind by what miracle of bureaucratic accident Deven manages to find money for the machine (he will pay dearly for the miracle later). All that matters is that he has gone to Delhi, remained undaunted by his first horrendous meetings with Nur, circumvented Nur's termagant wife, enlisted the aid of his fraudulent friend Murad, found the best electronics shop in the city, and now desires anxiously to purchase "the best equipment." But alas! he knows nothing about any machines, much less tape recorders, and he dreads being swindled. The thoroughly untrustworthy Murad handles the deal while Deven backs into a corner, muttering ineffectual cautions and threats.

"We are not prepared to pay fancy prices," Deven said nervously from his corner.

The dealer threw him a contemptuous look. "No fancy price? Then how will you get your fancy goods, hah?"

Murad, too, laughed. He and the dealer exchanged winks as they laughed.

Poor Deven is trapped again. He will resign himself to a machine—second-hand!—and pay as well for the "technical assistance" of Chiku, the dealer's nephew, a boy with a dubious diploma and a mop of oil-slicked hair. Even worse, the machine is Japanese, and Deven thinks he knows all about those cheap post-war Japanese goods.

It is difficult to resist re-telling more of this wonderful story. Like Naipaul in *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Desai touches on something profound in the sad comedy of her hero's compulsive struggle and certain defeat. She spoils it slightly at the end by a bit of moralizing about Deven's being the custodian of Nur's poetry but put "in custody" himself by that responsibility. Yes, Deven is repeatedly cornered and put in custody in this novel, everywhere he goes, and

many of these are dead-ends of his own devising, but that need not be underscored so heavily at the close. A better moral is implicit: that Nur's poetry is not after all well served by interviews, tape recordings, or other devices of journalism and academic opportunism. Still, Desai knows that the essential element of her story is Deven's purity of heart, and she ends with him at dawn, running to meet the fresh calamities of the day.

Ellen Gilchrist's stories are charming and funny, instantly engaging, deceptively simple. With the appearance last fall of her second collection it has become clear that her voice is unique.⁹ Another woman, you say, to compete with Bobbie Ann Mason, Alice Adams, Ann Beattie, Alice Munro, Ella Leffland, and (name your favorite) all the rest? Amazingly, yes. And another Southerner besides. Gilchrist now lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas, but her stories range from Indiana and Kentucky on down through Memphis and Jackson to New Orleans, taking side trips to Pensacola and Texas, out to Berkeley and back to Virginia. Her characters are mostly affluent girls and women from families well-rooted in Southern traditions (collapsing, of course) and richly aware of the privileges money can buy. Most of them are busy causing trouble, and getting themselves into it.

"Music," the second of three stories about the youth, adolescence, and marriage of Rhoda Manning, describes the determined way in which a fourteen-year-old loses her virginity. "The Double Happiness Bun" tells how the nineteen-year-old Norah Jane robs a New Orleans bar, steals a car, and gets herself pregnant. Naturally for a Gilchrist character, her baby has *two* fathers. In a sequence of stories about the restless life of Crystal Weiss, the heroine gets her older brother's new Mercedes smashed and then wreaks havoc on his soak-the-rich business, a game ranch in Texas. These quite extravagant actions are all kept credible and even sympathetic by Gilchrist's skillful handling of voice. Here is how "Music" begins:

Rhoda was fourteen years old the summer her father dragged her off to Clay County, Kentucky, to make her stop smoking and acting like a movie star. She was fourteen years old, a holy and terrible age, and her desire for beauty and romance drove her all day long and pursued her if she slept.

If is a charming touch. Whether in the first person or the third, Gilchrist always gets her characters vividly on the page by letting them talk. The author remains detached, paring her fingernails. "The Gauzy Edge of Paradise" begins, "The only reason Lanier and I went to the coast to begin with was to lose weight." Another voice starts out, in "DeDe's Talking, It's Her Turn," "The groom's moth-

⁹ VICTORY OVER JAPAN, by Ellen Gilchrist. Little, Brown. \$15.95.

er's garden. You've never seen such roses," followed by a list. Four of the stories about Crystal come from the voice of Traceleen, a black woman who tries to care for this flamboyantly unhappy family. Traceleen is a perfect choice for narrator because she foreshortens things so decisively: "He was marrying this girl, her daddy was said to be the richest man in Memphis," Traceleen explains. "The Weisses were real excited about it. As much money as they got I guess they figure they can use some more." Greatly to the author's credit, she does not strain to differentiate the language of Traceleen from anyone else's, rich or poor, black or white. Traceleen is no fool in any case: "That's the kind of man Miss Crystal goes for," she tells us. "I don't know why she ever married Mr. Manny to begin with. They not each other's type. It's a mismatch. Anybody could see that."

The distinctive trait of Gilchrist's colloquial style is its deliberate naiveté: short sentences, simple phrasing, lists. At moments this voice can sound like children's storytelling: "Nora Jane Whittington was going to have a baby." Or, "Lady Margaret Sarpie felt terrible." But the style admirably suits the frustrated-child mentality of most Gilchrist characters. Freed of linguistic entanglements, one dashes headlong through these stories, sometimes as if they were just the most marvelous gossip you ever heard, only to come up short against the sadness and anger and self-defeating pride of these vigorously unselfconscious people. Gilchrist has a strong impulse to tie her stories together, in sequences of three, four, and five episodes about a single figure, and with very suggestive non-chronological loops to hint at the fateful patterns of these lives. She is ostensibly a comic writer, and can be relied on for hilariously funny moments, but at heart all these tales are grim. Traceleen has an apt comment on this phenomenon: "Sometimes I start telling a story that's sad and the first thing anybody says is how come? How come they went and did that way? Nobody says how come when you tell a funny story. They're too busy laughing." Gilchrist's unique art is to tell such funny stories *and* get you to ask how come.

JEFFERSON HUNTER

I Do Not Like That Other Word

IN "LOTUS EATERS," THE FIFTH EPISODE of *Ulysses*, Joyce sends Bloom on his desultory way through the warm morning thinking about Guinness swirling in lazy pools and the cooling narcotic effect of a cigar. In equal measure Bloom likes the weakly stimulating effect of an epistolary flirtation with Martha Clifford. A letter from Bloom has apparently asked her to call him a dirty name; now, in a letter sent to "Henry Flower" at the post office, Martha types, mingling real prurience with feigned offense in a way that nicely matches Bloom's interest in the punishment she threatens, "I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world. Please tell me what is the real meaning of that word?" That is, in most editions of *Ulysses* she types "I do not like that other world." The carefully proofread two-volume set issued by John Lane in 1936 emends "world" to "word," which of course is right in the abstract but wrong in the vicinity of Martha Clifford (she also types "if you do not wrote" and "my patience are exhausted"). The emendation makes nonsense of Bloom's later thought "I do not like that other world she wrote." To this, modestly heroic, he adds "No more do I," turning away from the death-world of "Hades" to "warm full-blooded life," making vitalist morality out of typographical accident. Meanwhile *all* current editions of *Ulysses* omit Martha's lazy question mark after "Please tell me what is the real meaning of that word."

How do we know Martha made mistakes if they are missing from the texts we read? The answer is that they and thousands of other niceties of Joyce's imagination have been restored in a new, three-volume text, *Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition*, the product of seven years' unrelenting labor on the part of a computer and a rigorously scientific German bibliographical team headed by Hans Walter Gabler.¹ Gabler and his associates have masterfully analyzed the relevant documents: the working drafts (some extant, some inferred from later witnesses), the copies made for the serializations in *The Little Review* and *The Egoist*, the typescripts produced by various machines and various typists (some accurate, some kin to Martha Clifford), the overlay upon overlay of changes, the proofs sent back from the bemused printers in Dijon, the corrected and hugely extended proofs by Joyce (a third of the novel was written in the

¹ ULYSSES: A Critical and Synoptic Edition, prepared by Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. Garland Publishing. 3 vols. \$200.

margins of the printed sheets), the errata lists seldom error-free themselves and even more seldom incorporated into later printings. *Ulysses* was copied by amateur "improvers" of its inconsistencies and set into type by Frenchmen. Finally, it was checked by an author who had bad eyesight, an imperfect memory, and other things on his mind (chiefly, the writing of the last episodes of the novel). If Joyce was a Stephen Dedalus in revising his work, a perfectionist with a cursed jesuit strain that would allow no stopping short of the fullest meaning, the most artful phrasing, he was a Leopold Bloom—"Black conducts, reflects, (refracts is it?), the heat"—in transcribing it. He made mistakes in copying, failed to catch the mistakes of others, and based revisions on mistakes. Someone—not Joyce, in this instance—read Bloom's version of Molly's version of "metempsychosis" and refused to believe it; Gabler's edition gives us back the wonderful "metampsychosis." Someone took Buck Mulligan's repeated exclamation points out of "Telemachus"; they are now restored. A typist dropped four words from the old milkwoman's dialogue in the same episode, then dropped a few more from her reckoning of the bill; now her sums make sense. On and on the corrections go, averaging out at seven per page, striving mightily against that inherent propensity of print to err which Joyce acknowledged in the newspaper account of Dignam's funeral, where "L. Boom" is listed among the mourners.

A great many of the changes are minor, matters of format, capital letters, and italics. Hundreds if not thousands of commas are replaced or removed. With all these finicky details, significant only in their cumulative effect, to manage, it is little wonder that Gabler calls the change from "shrunken breasts" to "shrunken paps" a "weighty" revision. On the other hand, in a novel as obsessively contrived as this one, every change is in some sense weighty. It makes a difference that Bloom, as he moves along the street toward Dlugacz the porkbutcher, meditating on a more romantic journey through strange lands, thinks that he might "Dander along all day," not "Wander along all day" as we have previously read. It makes a greater difference that in "Scylla and Charybdis" Stephen enunciates, as he has done in no edition before this one, the mysterious "word known to all men." Overcoming for a moment his fear of the big words that make us so unhappy, he actually says, with extraordinary appropriateness, "Love, yes." The two words (as Richard Ellmann has noted) join him with the Bloom who tells the enraged Citizen what life is—"Love . . . the opposite of hatred"—and the Molly who ends the book with an affirmation.

The labors which produced this new *Ulysses* are recorded in a substantial apparatus of footnotes, textual notes, historical collation list, bibliography, and fifty-page Afterword explaining, among many other things, the rationale of the "copy-text." This is not the first printed edition, but a "continuous manuscript text" consisting of the holograph drafts in the Rosenbach Manuscript, Joyce's auto-

graph changes (where these survive), and other drafts, additions, and changes which have not survived but which may reasonably be inferred from the testimony of later documents. The Afterword is not easy going. Only students of textual criticism will be able to read it with pleasure (or be in a position to assess all the decisions it reveals), will be able to pick their way confidently through the thickets of compositional documents and transmissional documents and to join knowledgeably in the grave morrice, as Joyce put it in another context, of lemma and stemma. Gabler's prose, as read by a non-bibliographer at least, sometimes breaks down under the weight of the information it tries to impart:

Of the total of the critically ascertainable fair-copy revisions superseding readings of the hitherto received text transmitted unrevised from the final working draft via the typescript and proofs, a minority . . . are refused admission to the critical text in situations where the final working draft context established for them by a fair-copy/typescript agreement was itself subsequently revised.

Here we are not far from the parodies of "Cyclops," language set free to follow its own rules and expand at its own will. Still, bibliographers are not obliged to be stylists. What counts is the rigor and consistency of Gabler's editorial judgment, the clarity of *sigla* and abbreviations in the apparatus, and above all the reliability of the critical text printed on the right-hand pages of Gabler's three volumes. It cannot be doubted that this text is comprehensive and accurate. Six decades after its first publication, *Ulysses* has become available. Available at a price, it is true, but future trade editions of the novel will be able to benefit from Gabler's work and reprint the text he has established.

On the left-hand pages of the three volumes is a "synoptic" text; that is, a text identifying in chronological order all of Joyce's changes to a given *Urtext*. Compositional analysis, formerly dependent on the juggling of volume after volume of draft versions in *The James Joyce Archive*, is now a matter of mastering some symbols and scanning a page. An astonishing amount of information emerges from all the superscript numbers and letters, brackets within brackets, and carets rotated in various directions (to indicate various "overlay levels"). Take an apparently unremarkable lunch-time passage from "Lestrygonians." Disgusted by all the boltings and wolfings he sees in the Burton restaurant, Bloom has fled to Davy Byrne's quiet pub. There he wonders what to order. The original draft has Bloom moving briskly to a decision:

Sardines on the shelves. Potted meats. What is home without Plumtree's potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad. With it abode of bliss. Lord knows what concoction.
—Have you a cheese sandwich?

Joyce revised the draft (which is now lost) after it had been fair-copied, the revisions being recoverable from the typescript version. He put an exclamation point after “ad” and allowed Bloom to go on a bit about the ad’s stupidity (“Right under the obituary notices too”), altering this immediately to “Under the obituary notices they stuck it.” “Dignam’s potted meat” finds its way into the text: Bloom can’t forget the funeral. “Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White men too salty. Like pickled pork” all comes in, the product of Bloom’s travelogue-exotic imagination. “Pork” starts still another train of thought in this haphazard Jew: “Cauls mouldy tripes windpipes faked up. Kosher. Hygiene that was what they call now.” Later, in 1921, Joyce added a four-line insert beginning with “Yom Kippur fast spring cleaning of inside” and ending with cheese, which “digests all but itself. Mity cheese.” At this stage the revised passage was put in type.

From mid-August to mid-October of 1921 Joyce worked over the proofs of this part of “Lestrygonians” in at least four stages or levels, the first being the most important: he added brief extending phrases (“No meat and milk together” after “Kosher,” for example), one splendid pun (“Ham and his descendants mustered and bred there”), and Bloom’s recollection of a dirty limerick about cannibals. At last the passage had achieved its final form:

Sardines on the shelves. Almost taste them by looking. Sandwich? Ham and his descendants mustered and bred there. Potted meats. What is home without Plumtree’s potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad! Under the obituary notices they stuck it. All up a plumtree. Dignam’s potted meat. Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White missionary too salty. Like pickled pork. Expect the chief consumes the parts of honour. Ought to be tough from exercise. His wives in a row to watch the effect. *There was a right royal old nigger. Who ate or something the somethings of the reverend Mr MacTrigger.* With it an abode of bliss. Lord knows what concoction. Cauls mouldy tripes windpipes faked and minced up. Puzzle find the meat. Kosher. No meat and milk together. Hygiene that was what they call now. Yom Kippur fast spring cleaning of inside. Peace and war depend on some fellow’s digestion. Religions. Christmas turkeys and geese. Slaughter of innocents. Eat drink and be merry. Then casual wards full after. Heads banged. Cheese digests all but itself. Mity cheese.
—Have you a cheese sandwich?

The textual story does not quite end here, however. The proofs returned from Dijon pedantically inserted a comma after the first word in “Eat drink and be merry” and changed “Mity” to “Mighty.” Joyce failed to undo the changes, and all published editions before this one have reproduced them. We have grown used to “Mighty

cheese," a Bloomian phrase if there ever was one. Should we keep it? Should we assume that Joyce, in failing to correct the meddlesome French compositors, tacitly approved their alteration? Gabler says no, in this case and in nearly all the other cases of "passive authorization." He reminds us that Joyce was not reading proof against copy and argues that the novelist was simply making too many revisions to catch every error. Perhaps. No one doubts that Joyce made mistakes, passive and active, nor that he insisted on having his own way about the details of *Ulysses* and wanted his manuscript reproduced exactly. But a Joyce unfixated on perfection and open to experience—open to someone else's accidental improvement of his text—is at least conceivable. That hero of openness to experience Bloom could pluck "musterred and bred" from the shelves of Davy Byrne's pub, and his creator could pluck "Mighty cheese" from a proof.

"ITHACANS VOW PEN IS CHAMP," as the headline in "Aeolus" runs. Gabler is a conservative editor, one reluctant to depart from James the penman's "continuous manuscript text." He will let what seems an obvious repetition stand—"His fingers drew forth the letter the letter and crumpled the envelope in his pocket"—because the Rosenbach Manuscript reads that way, interpreting (unconvincingly) the second "the letter" as a piece of interior monologue. He admits authorial revisions into the text even though they contradict information given elsewhere. Many of these contradictions derive from the confusions and faulty memories of characters. But the characters are not always as confused as Gabler thinks. In "Nestor," Stephen sorrowfully reviews his debts, beginning with those to Mulligan: "nine pounds, three pairs of socks, ties." A typescript overlay of 1921 inserts "one pair brogues" into this list and the words are duly admitted, though as Gabler's textual note comments, "Episode 1 at 8.14-21 indicates that neither were the (black) brogues Mulligan's, nor had Mulligan procured them for Stephen." But the difficulties here are the editor's, not Stephen's or Joyce's. Page 8 of Episode 1 mentions the secondhand black *breeks*, not brogues, which were worn by some "poxy bowsy" and now fit Stephen "well enough." These breeks or trousers, moreover, do seem to come from Mulligan. Who more likely than he to get them off a patient in the Mater and Richmond? When Stephen taps his way across the shells of Sandymount Strand in "Proteus," thinking "My two feet in his boots are at the ends of his legs, *nebeneinander*," he accurately describes his borrowings.

In the old familiar text of *Ulysses* the Idiot at the Mabbot street entrance to nighttown lifts his palsied left arm and gurgles "Grhahute!" As revised, he gurgles "Ghahute!" It seems unlikely that ground-breaking interpretations of the novel will follow from this change, but no one can say what is likely to happen once Joyceans have pondered the separate and cumulative effect of the thousands

of changes now recorded. It will take time to digest the corrected *Ulysses*, perhaps correct a few of its corrections, and apply its lessons to our longstanding debate about what the work is. In the old-fashioned view (to simplify), *Ulysses* is a novel, though a highly unconventional one and one growing more unconventional as it goes along, and like all novels reproduces in words the events and sensations of experience; it gives us Dublin and Dubliners on a June day. In the new-fashioned view, *Ulysses* is radically anti-novelistic, a sequence of styles following their own rules, perhaps even an autonomous verbal structure. One eye-catching change in the new edition would seem to support the new-fashioned view: following Joyce's consistent manuscript practice, Gabler has marked the opening of direct speech by *unindented* dashes, and thus made it less distinct from narrative or interior monologue, less "privileged," less a reliable transcript of talk heard in Dublin. But the newly formatted quotations are only marginally less distinct. The dashes are still there; shifts in narrative authority are still signalled. And many of Gabler's new readings localize direct speech more finely than ever. As the Citizen excoriates the French ("never worth a roasted fart to Ireland") he claims they are making an "entente cordial" with perfidious Albion. You can hear him getting his Irish tongue around those two words as you could never quite hear him pronouncing, in the old version, a carefully italicized "*Entente cordiale.*" In "Circe," the coyly playful Josie Breen orders Bloom to account for himself "this very sminute," while the excited Mary Driscoll defends herself with "As God is looking down on me this night if ever I laid a hand to them oylsters!" We owe both "sminute" and "oylsters" to Gabler, which is to say that we owe to him a sharper sense of the world, actual or imagined, in which Josie, Mary, Bloom, Stephen, Molly, and all the rest of them dwell, dream, love, hate, use words. "Word" and "world": what Martha meant and what she typed, what her letter consists of and what she herself is made by. Back and forth between the two great subjects of *Ulysses* the reader must go, freely letting language play, strictly holding language to its task of rendering Dublin. The zigzag journey will be pleasanter now that we know the language is really Joyce's.

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

Clinging to the Plot

IN A STORY SHE TELLS OF "A Conversation with My Father," Grace Paley calls plot "the absolute line between two points which I've always despised." "Not for literary reasons," she tells us, "but because it takes all hope away. Everyone, real or invented, deserves the open destiny of life." Plot is Peter Brooks's subject,¹ and he might well take Paley's definition as exemplifying the pervasive modern suspicion of exactly that element of fiction which Aristotle found most important. Brooks puts it up front at once: "'Reading for the plot,' we learned somewhere in the course of our schooling, is a low form of activity." Forster regretted it ("Oh dear yes, the novel tells a story"). Modern critics promote lyric rather than narrative values. Brooks ticks off the things we have been taught to attend to: "point of view," "tone," "symbol," "spatial form," "psychology"—all in their implications static rather than dynamic. If events occur in the modern story—as they must—and occur in some sort of sequence, this is something to be conceded, not proclaimed:

If the novels of Joyce and Woolf and Proust and Gide, and then Faulkner and Robbe-Grillet, cannot do without plotting, insofar as they remain narrative structures that signify, they plot with irony and bad conscience, intent (in their very different ways) to expose the artifices of formal structure and design. Whereas it was part of the triumph of the nineteenth-century novel in its golden age to plot with a good conscience, in confidence that the elaboration of plot corresponded to, and illuminated, human complexities.

No more. Plot is now relegated to the yawning category of mass-consumption literature, beneath consideration if not beneath contempt.

Brooks's fine, demanding book should put an end to that. It is his enterprise to show us that we need plot; that our need is deep, not trivial; that plot enacts a "promise of progress toward meaning"; that it speaks of and to our nature as temporal and mortal beings. And though he affirms plot and Paley purports to despise it, he would join her in repudiating reasons that are purely literary. For

¹ READING FOR THE PLOT: Design and Intention in Narrative, by *Peter Brooks*. Knopf. \$17.95.

writer and critic, as for the generality of readers, plot and our attitude toward it is not a matter only of what goes on between the covers of books. So it is that a scholarly study of something as antiseptic as "the role of plot in shaping texts" directs us to a kind of question I don't recall hearing asked in recent criticism: "How do we find significant plots for our lives?" Professor Brooks's hope—one which would not have surprised Arnold unless, perhaps, to find it needed hoping—is nothing less than that "through study of the work accomplished by fictions we may be able to reconnect literary criticism to human concern." For "our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative," and plot is "the product of our refusal to allow temporality to be meaningless, our stubborn insistence on making meaning in the world and in our lives."

Once we believed in plots. (Some, untouched by the discontinuities and refusals of modern literature, still do.) Once there were "sacred plots" in which peoples and individuals could find themselves, "revealed plots," "providential plots": the Chosen People, Redemption, the Second Coming. But though Arnold's Sea of Faith had already receded by the novel's Golden Age, the need for ways of organizing and explaining experience remained. Brooks's guess is that "the enormous narrative production" of the nineteenth century "suggest[s] an anxiety at the loss of providential plots." These gone, "the plotting of the individual or social or institutional life story takes on new urgency." "The absence or silence of divine masterplots" intensifies the need for human authors.

There were, of course, many and many; Brooks, without any claim to comprehensiveness, gives us intensive examinations of plottings by Balzac, Stendhal, Dickens, Flaubert, Conan Doyle, Conrad, and Faulkner, among others, along with a fascinating chapter on a work few of us are likely to identify as "the most widely read novel of the nineteenth century," Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*. But the figure who here emerges as archplotter is not a writer of fictions—at least not intentionally so. Not everyone will find congenial Brooks's substitution of Freud's plot for the divine masterplot, though we should have been prepared; certainly, in today's literary criticism Freudianism is neither absent nor silent. But though Brooks is an adept player of the intoxicating new game—shall we call it Metametaphor?—of metaphorizing the metaphors of the Master ("In cultural politics, 1830 . . . appears as an intensely oedipal moment"), what draws him to Freud is something more fundamental than the exhilaration of extending terms like incest and castration to cover phenomena to which only a truly imaginative displacement can allow us to apply them. My pre-Freudian peevishness at post-Freudian tropes melts away in the reading. Brooks's Freudianism is not a course of intellectual stretching exercises but a way to his goal: the reinstatement of human concern in criticism. "Freud's restless thought and his dynamic model of psychic life

summons us to think beyond formalist paradigms," to move beyond statics to a dynamics that "can reconstruct, however provisionally and tenuously, time lost and time continuing." What Brooks needs from "Freud's masterplot" is that built-in relation to development in time, and its commitment to the discovery—or is it rather the creation?—of significance through memory and narration.

It is out of Freud's Eros that he draws one of the most suggestive of his many suggestive definitions of plot, as "the figure of displacement, desire leading to change of position," a figure he discerns over and over again in that characteristic nineteenth-century genre, the novel of ambition. He sees it in Balzac's propulsive heroes; in Stendhal's Julien Sorel, where desire propels, then fails; in Flaubert's Frederic Moreau, where it fizzles; in Dickens's Pip, where it is "misapprehended." The divine masterplot lacking, this one is at hand; properly sounded, Brooks thinks it can speak to the human concern of writers, of their imagined characters, of critics, and of readers, as it enacts "the temporality of desire" and engages our own stubborn longing for the "working through" that will bring us significantly from beginnings through occluded middles to ends. For Brooks, "the goal of all storytelling" is still what Walter Benjamin called it, what it has been ever since Homer gave us our first great masterplots: wisdom.

Of course it must be wisdom beset. That which we are, we are in time and history; irony is the trope of our discontented winter, and what Brooks gives with one hand he takes away with the other. A brilliant reading of *Great Expectations* affirms the power of plot to express meaning: "All the issues raised in the novel—social, ethical, interpretive—are here simultaneously brought to climax through the peripety of the plot." Yet plot is rendered problematic even as it triumphs. Pip's story has a plot, but it is not the plot he has believed in. He has repressed the convict Magwitch; he has turned the real witch, Miss Havisham, into the fairy underwriter of his expectations, and "the return of the repressed," of "the self's other story, the true history of its misapprehended desire," must force a total revision. "Pip has in fact misread the plot of his life."

From here it is only a short step into our own labyrinth. A discussion of *L'Education sentimentale*, its "tenuous readability" and its "systematic perversion of plot," leads back into a more "readable" text, Balzac's *Le Colonel Chabert*, that itself dramatizes the act of narration. It yields, in ways too complicated to summarize, a Freudian model of reading: narrator and listener, author and readers are seen in a relation of transference or exchange, the reader as analyst, the text as analysand offering narratives to interpretation. Successfully worked through, "the transference delivers one back to a changed reality," as does "any text experienced by any reader."

But that encouraging conclusion is only provisionally secure. We continue into the *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's, or Conrad's, "unread-

able report," still working within traditional forms, but "suspiciously," raises "central questions about the epistemology of narrative." Once meaning, in fiction as well as in the analytic situation, is seen as a transaction, "dialogic in nature," "meaning will never lie in the summing up but only in the transmission." Significant events have been reduced to the telling of them, in a "potentially infinite" process in which "any closure or termination [is] merely provisional." Analysis interminable. Marlow repeats Kurtz's story; Marlow's listeners "presumably will have to repeat Marlow's story of Kurtz's story." And we who are Conrad's listeners/readers/critics are doing the same.

Yet, Brooks seems regretfully to conclude, what we tell and retell is what we cannot know—not in stories, not in life. As Brooks takes us through Freud's case-history of the Wolf Man, this ostensibly non-fictional report is seen as a palimpsest of fictions. In his first version, Freud confidently traces the Wolf Man's childhood neurosis to a dream, the dream to a "primal scene"; voilà. Yet his additions to the text, four years later, question whether the patient's observation of parental intercourse (supposedly at age one and a half) ever really occurred. Quite possibly it was "a phantasy concocted from the observation of animals copulating, then referred back to the parents"—still, however, capable of affecting the phantasiist. And Freud will neither attempt to reconcile his two versions, nor suppress one in favor of the other; he leaves them, finally, "juxtaposed, indeed superimposed."

Which came out, the lady or the tiger? Even Frank Stockton didn't know. We have arrived in that world of narrative indeterminacy, of suspension, of relativity we know so well. After this we are prepared for the demonstration, in a convincing reading of *Absalom, Absalom!*, that the key to the plot of that densely plotted novel is no key at all, that the hard-won revelation of race and parentage that we had thought, in quasi-Dickensian fashion, explained the novelistic phenomena, is undocumented, unproved, only a reconstruction imagined (complete with dialogue!) by two Harvard undergraduates, one of whom is shortly to commit suicide.

In life and literature, then, our plots are fictions. Yet we need their illusive shape. "In the absence or silence of divine masterplots, the organization and interpretation of human plots remains as necessary as it is problematic. Reading the signs of intention in life's actions is the central act of existence, which in turn legitimizes the act of reading." Legitimizes? Maybe. Brooks's humane expedition conducts us to a profoundly disturbing conclusion:

If the master text is not available, we are condemned to the reading of erroneous plots, granted insight only insofar as we can gain disillusion from them. We are condemned to repetition, re-reading, in the knowledge that what we discover will always be

that there was nothing to be discovered. Yet the process remains necessary. . . .

Such wisdom is a hard substitute for what we used to feel as truth, in fictions and in lives.

Perhaps if we chose a different masterplot? There is Marx's, of course, the first alternative that comes to mind. But that is social, not individual, more suited, perhaps, to plotting the fortunes of groups than of the individual protagonists that concern Brooks here. Yet if we are to go with psychotherapy, fast becoming a universal plot for people who read books of this sort about books of this sort, might we not choose a model less hermetic than Freud's, one which adds to the interpretive dialogue a commitment to observed and observable behavior, which allows for the possibility of verification and falsification, of comparison of the event with the telling, and so affirms the existence of a world at least partially knowable? The voice of nostalgia speaks. Was all that crowd of authors—Austen, Tolstoy, Eliot, Hardy, *Trollope*, God bless him, the lot of them, who just *told* us about what happened to their characters—so utterly naive about the ends, beginnings, middle of human life? For what wisdom, then, do we read them?

Reading for the Plot is well worth working through, not least for virtues I have found no room for here, its generous infusions of what George Steiner once called the Old Criticism, in which, as in the chapter on Sue, we are told interesting true things we didn't know and our attention is called to things agreeably in the text which nevertheless we hadn't noticed. But its primary usefulness will be as a sympathetic guidebook to the land of uncertainty into which modern narratology seems to want to lead us. In this land all narrators are unreliable, all events and meanings problematic. It may be so. Select your texts rightly and it *is* so. But if indeed we create our truths, they are then our own, and perhaps this one, rather recent after all, admits of uncreating. A writer like Paley, at any rate, as dodgy a narrator of this waning century as you could hope to find, can interpret the rejection of plot not as loss but as gain, as an affirmation of "the open destiny of life" for all of us, real, invented, or a little bit of both. Plot, said Aristotle, imitates human beings and what they did, for while "it is according to their characters that people are what they are, it is according to their actions that they are happy or the opposite." The root of drama is the verb "to do." There still remain storytellers, some of them quite adequately sophisticated, who tell stories of people's doings and persuade us that they as good as happened. Some of them even inhabit Professor Brooks's shadowland of disillusion. They hint that even uncertainty can open to hope, that we can opt for construction, not deconstruction, that though some meanings are imposed and arbitrary, some may be discovered and true. However philosophers and

critics insist we have nothing to hold on to but the telling, readers—as Professor Brooks gladly acknowledges—will keep on reading for the tale.

A heartfelt addendum: Don't think reading this book will be easy. Brooks writes well; sentences like "In this sense, the metaphoric work of eventual totalization determines the meaning and status of the metonymic work of sequence" are blessedly rare. But all those *words* are present to besiege us—psychoanalytic, formalist, structuralist, deconstructionist, the transmogrified vocabulary of Renaissance rhetoric we have come to know and fear. Professor Brooks genuinely wants to help; he comes a lot closer to defining the terms we're going to need than (say) Barthes or Derrida or Bloom. There's slippage, though, and it may be transgressive, though I can't say whether it's into metonymy or metaphor. Brooks is at Yale, and whatever his reader-friendliness, it's easy for him to forget that not all of us readers talk like that. Vocabularies take a lot of getting used to. If it's not our job we won't try, unless we can think it's worth the trouble. *Reading for the Plot* suggests it might be.

Hotel Fiesta

Poems by Lynn Emanuel

"A most assured and auspicious debut. . . . Constructing a tale of childhood with a painter-father, a lost mother, and a bohemian entourage, Lynn Emanuel's *Hotel Fiesta* is a dense search for stability in the ballroom of erotica. These gritty, realistic poems experience cruelty, malice, deceit, passion, hope, helplessness, and the mortal scars that constitute personality's growth. Lynn Emanuel is a true and singular talent"—Dave Smith.

"As she moves from subject to subject, keeping her distance yet always convincing us of her essential involvement, Emanuel has given us a versatile and finely orchestrated book of poems"—*Virginia Quarterly Review*. \$10.95 (cloth), \$6.95 (paper)

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MARK JARMAN

Generations and Contemporaries

THE THIRTEEN AMERICAN POETS UNDER REVIEW here were born between 1900 and 1960. I have decided to group them by generation, taking a literary generation to be born every ten years. The one American generation which might conceivably be named, like Auden's, after its most famous poet—Robert Lowell—is absent, however. I am also fully aware that in a few cases, aesthetic sympathies cross the age line and that these small groups may not at all accurately represent a generation of poets. I do believe the picture that will develop is one of contemporary variety across and within the generational boundaries.

Born before World War I, Elder Olson¹ writes a poem of classical precision, with a modernist's detachment. The landscapes of the poem, like "Rottenrock Mountain," are as artificial as those of Laforgue. His translation of Laforgue's "Moon Solo" places him with that poet for whom nature is an epigram not a romantic soul-mate. A glass man walks the street, a Russian doll reveals the class struggle, the face of W. H. Auden is a cautionary tale of fame's consequences.

Every experience has its meaning, every poem is executed with a watchmaker's skill. All parts tick together and the poem produces wisdom. Poetry like Elder Olson's is rare nowadays simply because the poets who are most inclined to write it are, like Mr. Olson, growing older. His prefatory note to the book explains that he has called it "*Last Poems*, not because I think I shall write no more, but because—considering my rate of production—I think it unlikely that I shall make another collection." The title then is not posthumous, as it first appears, but judicious.

One might think that such a poet would truly serve up his most excellent work in his epigrams, which James Dickey in the cover notes compares favorably to *The Greek Anthology*. But turning to "Conversation Pieces" one finds poems that are only sort of good. Here is the best of the lot:

Variation on a Theme All Too Familiar

For this the poet toiled and came to wreck:
Over his hard-won pages, by and by,

¹ LAST POEMS, by Elder Olson. University of Chicago Press. \$6.95.

Dull and uncomprehending as a fly,
Some critic crawls, and leaves his little speck.

What may seem most interesting to other, younger readers of this book are the occasions when the subject nearly escapes Olson's magisterial, and very admirable, command. One is the epistolary poem "Volcán de Agua" which recollects a near fatal climbing expedition, "Everything underfoot instantly slipping away, / Everything overhead instantly rushing down." The other is a study in something like controlled ferocity (Olson's voice at times has the grand spleen of a professor sick of foolishness). "Last Warning" is the last poem of the book and bites with the mordancy of Empson's "Missing Dates." It does not seem likely that we will see a poet like Elder Olson again for a long time.

Skipping, as I said, the Lowell Generation, we come to those poets born in the 1920s. Shirley Kaufman, Carolyn Kizer, and Allen Ginsberg are notable members of that generation. They are also poets who are or have been very much engaged with contemporary issues—an engagement missing from generations who are figuratively their siblings and children.

Shirley Kaufman calls her latest collection of 63 poems, "A Poem."² Following a prologue, it is in three parts: "Two Directions," "Histories," and "Small Comforts." The claims of the title include those of Israel and its citizens, especially in Jerusalem, "A city of exiles," where Kaufman lives. Other claims are those made on the poet by her past and those which history makes on Israel, whether it be Biblical history or the series of recent wars. There are also the claims of love, the domestic life, and the delicacy with which one lives and loves in a city like Jerusalem and a nation like Israel.

Like other accomplished poets born in the twenties, Kaufman has a confidence that allows her to speak as herself. She can move with ease into the first person plural or into the narrative third person, but one always senses that the voice is Shirley Kaufman's and not one she has worked up and is trying out. Even when a love poem, like "Your Hands," turns banal, "No one can cut such a perfect / thin slice of Edam for my toast," the same adult voice is speaking in all the poems.

On the sill the dove sleeps
over her two damp birds.
She built a nest in the pot of geraniums
and yesterday they hatched,
little homemade bombs.
They are not Jews or Arabs.

² CLAIMS, by Shirley Kaufman. The Sheep Meadow Press. \$13.95.

Paradoxically, this same individuality of voice works best or is least susceptible to banality when the subject is others, those around or before or related to the poet: the Bedouin, her parents and grandparents, an Aunt Fan, a fawn rescued from a pack of dogs, a woman who has had a goiter removed, David and Abishag. These characters' claims are part of a natural order which includes the jacaranda in the book's prologue and the autumn crocus in the last poem and supersedes all other claims. The culmination of this theme is the poem "The Order of Things." The last two stanzas suggest the natural human importance that takes precedence over extremities.

Rabbi ben Zakkai said: If there's a tree
in your hand when they tell you
Behold the Messiah!
first plant the tree
and afterwards go out to greet him.

That's why olive trees
in the garden of Gethsemane
are as old as Christ.

A belief in the order of things, like a belief in the naturalness of her own voice, is a sign of a poet's maturity, one to note with pleasure and something we would expect, too, from a poet now in her early sixties.

The major service Copper Canyon Press has done us with Carolyn Kizer's new collection,³ is to reprint many fine poems that were included in now out-of-print editions. So, in one book, we have her best work; her poems from the Chinese in a section entitled "Chinese Love"; "A Month in Summer," her experiment with prose and haiku to narrate a deteriorating love affair; "Pro Femina" now with a fourth part spoken in the voice of Robert Louis Stevenson's wife Fanny; and two other poems it would have been sad to lose, "The Great Blue Heron" and what I think of as her very best poem, "For Jan, in Bar Maria."

The most interesting addition is "Part Four: Fanny" of "Pro Femina." Fanny writes in her diary of the life she and R. L. S. lived in Samoa before his death. She gardens and plants, gardens and plants, obsessed with what can be grown there, what the domestic earth of the South Pacific can yield; she is in "a fever of planting" that equals and exceeds her husband's fever of dying, and this fever lasts through thirty-three seven-line stanzas. The poem is the signal contribution to a book subtitled "Poems for Women," for it reveals

³ MERMAIDS IN THE BASEMENT, POEMS FOR WOMEN, by Carolyn Kizer. Copper Canyon Press. \$7.00.

the feminine imagination that Samuel Butler intuited in the *Odyssey*. It pits her experience of Samoa against her husband's imagination of it (although on the whole Stevenson is rather a pale character, like Lowell's father in *Life Studies*).

In Kizer's best work a colloquial voice works against a high rhetorical pitch. This is perfectly accomplished in "For Jan, in Bar Maria" and in the versions from the Chinese, and allows the former to have a robustness and fellow-feeling and the latter to have a kind of sexual excitement. But when Kizer does work overtime in other poems, she overextends metaphors and overemphasizes prosody, becoming heavy-handed and melodramatic. "The Intruder" about how her mother, a lover of wild animals, once rescued a bat from the pet cat, only to discover that it was swarming with lice, ends,

She swept to the kitchen. Turning on the tap,
She washed and washed the pity from her hands.

Metaphorically, that last line follows from the poem, but the reification of pity and the meter itself are too much.

There is little of Elder Olson's judicious restraint in Kizer's formal poems, when she chooses to write them. For her, as for her fellow Northwesterner Theodore Roethke, traditional prosody is one style. And she succeeds at it best when her voice is shrewdly satirical, as in "Pro Femina" and in "Fanny," too, a new masterpiece.

If Allen Ginsberg's massive collected poems,⁴ an immense counterweight to the small, affordable books *City Lights* did, 837 pages including the index, is any indication, and we have every reason to believe it is in its chronological format, Ginsberg was not a promising young poet nor has he become a mature older poet. But for about ten years, from 1955 to 1965, his writing anticipated American life, especially the youth subculture built around music and drugs and the now waning fascination with Eastern religions. From page 126, the first page of "Howl," to page 365 and a poem called "Portland Coliseum" the essential Ginsberg can be found—poet of these states, prophet of the American culture. Before page 126 is a rather maudlin young guy who writes self-lacerating doggerel in his notebook and yearns for transcendental knowledge and a good lay; after page 365 is a public figure on a tape recorder again dipping into doggerel to come up with rock and roll lyrics and still looking for someone to "pull my daisy."

The ten years between those pages are undeniable: "Howl," "Sather Gate Illumination," "America" (still very funny), "To Aunt Rose," "Laughing Gas," "Igny," "Kaddish and Related Poems," "Patna-Benares Express," "Last Night in Calcutta," "Angkor Wat," and "Kral Majales." These poems read like news of what is to come,

⁴ COLLECTED POEMS 1947-1980, by Allen Ginsberg. Harper & Row. \$27.50.

news of what was already happening in the world where Ginsberg lived and loved, thought and wrote, a definite subculture that has now been very much assimilated into American life, even if only as common knowledge. We know that sexuality is as various as American life is supposed to be. We know our government's abuse of its immense military power is madness. Drugs have been sources of insight rather than simply recreational. A spiritual alternative to western religion exists in the orient. The list sounds dismissive only because to mention these themes of Ginsberg is to realize, unfortunately, how ironic they have become, how much a source of parody. Ginsberg can be blisteringly satirical, as in "America." He can sense a movement beginning as in "Kral Majales" about his experience as May King in Czechoslovakia in 1965. Mostly he is achingly sincere, a quality he shares with the untalented young man also represented here and with the older establishment figure whose gifts have diminished.

A poem that is key only because it marks the end of Ginsberg's vital decade is "Portland Coliseum." It is about a rock and roll concert.

The million children
the thousand worlds
bounce in their seats, bash
each other's sides, press
legs together nervous
Scream again & claphand
become one Animal
in the New World Auditorium
—hands waving myriad
snakes of thought
screech beyond hearing

They are watching "Goofed Ringo," "Silent George," "Short black-skulled Paul," "Lennon the Captain." Ginsberg's adult bemusement is sad. It is 1965. In a year he will be forty and long past a trustworthy age.

Born in the 1930s, Fred Chappell, Dick Allen, and Susan Donnelly represent an American willingness to put poetry to any fortuitous use. That is to say, as they are represented by their new collections, they are poets of the occasion that is created by a juxtaposition or idea that departs from everyday reality.

Fred Chappell's new volume is a departure from his previous work and a singular one at that—a murder mystery in a book of poems.⁵ The plot mixes Poe's "Hopfrog" and Verdi's "Rigoletto" and the style is reminiscent both of Poe's and Twain's when they

⁵ CASTLE TZINGAL, by *Fred Chappell*. Louisiana State University Press. \$6.95.

wrote of an imagined world of courts and castles. Perhaps that world is a Southern obsession. The castle in question is populated by a number of voices: a queen's, an admiral's, a foreign envoy's, a page's, an astrologer's, a homunculus', a mad king's, and a disembodied voice belonging to the murder victim. Each speaker has more than one poem and, as the mystery grows, the language disappears or becomes transparent. The solution of the mystery results in the dissolution of some characters and their voices. All are courtiers of the monstrous King Tzingal and, more or less, victims of his psychological cruelty. He is very much like Graham Greene's Dr. Fischer of Geneva, but both have a long lineage. They include, as the undertone of Chappell's book makes clear, even Hamlet whose moral outrage looks, to his victims, very like gratuitous cruelty.

Although there is no single outstanding poem, the story holds together. Although the language these characters speak is ersatz courtly, some like the Homunculus speak it with zest.

My name is Flyting, but they call me Tweak.
I'm cousin-german to the mouse and hare
By means of my father Astrologer
Who draws our futures, and some kin to the Admiral
Because I am, you see, half-man half-mineral.

This little Tristram Shandy-esque golem really does not get enough playing time. He is a spy for anyone who will pay him and solves the mystery for the other spy, the foreign envoy. For his reward, he asks,

. . . a modest duchy?
I never would contest for a more ambitious prize.
A modest *little* duchy. To match my size.

Finally, *Castle Tzingal* is an oddity, and may be a toy for Chappell, whose Midquest tetralogy is something else altogether. But I do think in this almost miniature work he has done something like Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" and has located once again where the gothic in Southern gothic originates: in basements where the unspeakable has been hidden.

Dick Allen's sense of occasion is announced in the title of his new poetry miscellany.⁶ Other titles like it, "To an Astronaut Visiting a Japanese Garden at Night," "The People Through the Train Window," "University Students Strolling Through Midnight," give the impression that Allen is typical of the American poet whose poem must begin with the oddness of an event. These poems are the work of a sensitive and erudite man, yet reading them one by one

⁶ OVERNIGHT IN THE GUEST HOUSE OF THE MYSTIC, by Dick Allen. Louisiana State University Press. \$5.95.

they appear, at first, to be the products of a poet unobsessed by form or subject. Only the love poems in the second part of this three part collection hint at a coherent theme.

Going back over the book, however, what had seemed to be simply an eccentric taste for metaphors derived from science fiction and mysticism begins to look like a desire for transcendence. In fact, the little poem about the astronaut in the Japanese garden radiates tension like a spider pulsing in its web.

Those few branches reaching for the moon
 out of all these trees, out of all this forest,
 if they were carved upon a vase on some museum table,
 the moon falling among them, and the vase was green,
 would take you back up through the stars, despite
 the interventions of a world you knew by hand.

The pop taste for such mysteries may be stale, but Allen's expression of hope in what lies beyond is finally an integrated one, making the title poem especially moving, for he knows the limitation of his subject matter.

I dream
 of histories ahead, the quasars flowering
 upon the edge of space; odd specks of light
 like fireflies in the pines, the first
 new cities of another galaxy.

Which marks me of my time—which turns
 almost helplessly between
 huge shadows and the drifting stars,
 a boat upon a boat at sea
 floating in a bottle, each uplifted sail
 raised to catch a wind that cannot be.

His dream does indeed mark him of his time, as it does many another, yet the wisdom of the statement—the admission—is rare.

Susan Donnelly's first collection⁷ is the winner of the Samuel French Morse Poetry Prize judged by Anthony Hecht. In his introduction, Hecht praises her poetry's "wit, its daring, its copiousness of invention, and its not infrequent sprightliness." All these laudable qualities are certainly present, along with the apprentice mind shopping for ideas. The title poem is immediately attractive, because the idea is so interesting, but, speculate a minute on the implication of the title and you have the poem before you read it: If Eve names the animals, it stands to reason that she will give them

⁷ EVE NAMES THE ANIMALS, by Susan Donnelly. Northeastern University Press. \$5.95.

different names than Adam. What is most unpredictable in the poem is its last line. "I liked change," says Susan Donnelly's Eve, and that conclusion resonates eerily, spreading out into the fallen world and setting woman, as envisioned here, in a true contrast to man.

Donnelly actually writes best in harness and the most successful poems of the collection include "Dolls" in rhyming quatrains, a sonnet called "On Discovering a Poem by My Great-Uncle Will Leahy in an Antique Shop in Kennebunkport," and a good pantoum entitled "Aunt." One of her best, "Ark Song," is in rhyming tetrameter couplets and sets the peaceable kingdom aboard Noah's vessel.

The agile monkey woos the bear.
The ocelot sighs in the panther's lair.

The elephant sinks to his knees. His ears
flutter with wren sounds, which he hears

like the wind in the grasses under the sea.
—And your cool breath rekindles me.

It is curious that a formalist of Hecht's stringency should choose a book made up largely of what we might call American free verse: imagistic, associative, colloquial, with only a handful of poems that demonstrate this poet's aptitude for meter and rhyme. It is when Donnelly writes in the forms that Hecht himself mastered long ago that she, too, sounds most distinct. Poets born in the thirties may find themselves caught in that old quarrel between free and formal verse. Donnelly should plump for Hecht's side, as the poem "Dolls" makes clear in the last stanza.

Now Maily whistles her randy ditty,
her bold eyes wink at the glare of spring.
But Mother wonders in fear and pity
if large, careless hands control everything.

The generation of poets born in the 1940s, the first rumble of the baby boom, are currently engaged in the most stimulating struggle in contemporary American poetry, that between narrative and non-narrative verse. Of the three under review here, Richard Tillinghast is a narrative poet whereas Michael Palmer, of the language poets, would destroy continuity in poetry. Hanging between them with his discursive meditations is John Koethe, mediating, necessary, and lukewarm.

Richard Tillinghast's third book⁸ is his best. It includes six poems,

⁸ OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE, by *Richard Tillinghast*. Wesleyan University Press. \$16.00.

one of them quite long, and only one of them not really up to the others. That one, "Easter Week: Vermont," says it all in the title. The rest of the book, however, is a great achievement.

Tillinghast has learned well from his teacher Robert Lowell, learned the necessity to pack the erratic free verse line with details, for these very specificities inevitably create a rhythm. This, incidentally, is a lesson Whitman teaches, too. The title poem, which is about generations, the self-sacrificing one of the 1940s and their self-indulgent children of the 1960s and 1970s, shows how Tillinghast does it in the following passage.

Looking ahead, there was a world of blue-grass lawns,
paneled wood enameled white, grandparents' faces
rosy over reassuring, hand-rubbed bannisters,
Yale locks, brass door-knockers, hardwood floors,
the odor of good furniture and wax,
a holiday design of holly leaves and berries on a stiff card,
a little girl holding gift packages as big as she is,
a boy, a real boy, bright as a new penny.

This Norman Rockwell image of the complacent fifties gives way to "the lives / of those who . . . / floated in tubs of hot, redwood-scented water with friends, / and greeted each other with the word, 'Peace.'"

Vestiges, ruins, and remnants dominate the book. It is hard to rank the poems but I believe the best is "Fossils, Metal, and the Blue Limit" simply because of the unlikelihood of its subject and how it makes a nexus—and narrative—out of the implications of a VW van breaking down on Highway 1 just north of San Francisco. The prose poem "Earthquake Story" is good too, a witty piece of metafiction, crossing between tone and person, even venturing into the territory of disrupted syntax. The book's centerpiece, however, is the nearly thirty-page "Sewanee in Ruins" which recollects the history of the University of the South and consequently of the Civil War's aftermath. It, too, is about generations, in this case those who first attended this "Southern Oxford" a hundred years ago, and those who do today, the poet's students, "these ripe-peach bodies and untouched smiles, / these peacock-blue, canary-yellow, billiard-table-green / clothes from the catalogue of L.L. Bean." The poem has a great sweep of American history and though it could not be called a political poem *per se*, it shows that Tillinghast is in touch with the American moment, as do these lines from the book's last poem "Envoi."

Go, little book, *par avion* . . .

Fly as I taught you
With bombs tucked under your wings,

In a V of attack, low to the ground,
Underneath the enemy's lazy radar. . . .

I have assumed that Michael Palmer is one of the so-called language poets (a title some of their number have justly tried to repudiate or explain away but which has stuck) who, if rumor is correct, have taken over San Francisco. If that is so, it won't be the first time that city has been commandeered by a vanguard movement. Among the language poets themselves there are many kinds. Palmer is one who depends on the disruption of transition from sentence to sentence and not so much on the destruction of syntax itself. There are some, like Clark Coolidge, who make poems of asyntactical lumps and words cut off from the mass of language. Palmer is more lyrical in this book⁹ than ideological.

Now say the words you had meant to
Now say the words such words mean

The car is white but does not run
It fits in a pocket

He slept inside the rock,
a flower that was almost blue
"The Theory of the Flower"

Those poems constructed like the one quoted above are best, for their free floating lines become a series of aphorisms. When Palmer comes too close to strict narrative, he begins to sound like a watery version of James Tate. Elsewhere, as in the title poem, he glances off Lyn Hejinian's *My Life* (the greatest success of the language poets so far), which in turn echoes Nathalie Sarraute's enigmatic, elliptical autobiographical sketches or quick-takes.

What is most prominent and enjoyable about Palmer's poetry is the high art of its self-referentiality. This sort of writing is the ultimate end of Modernism, offering eyes for the hooks of criticism to catch on. Titles like "Lies of the Poem" and "The Theory of the Flower" plus the high tech quality of "Idem 1-4" attest to Palmer's recognition of the poem's artifice. "Dearest Reader" after the first six lines interrupts a simple narrative with an address to the reader that explains nothing. It is the very nature of disrupted expectations that makes this poetry the self-conscious art that it is. Morally, it is meant to cut through illusions; aesthetically, it is supposed to create new musics, new anatomies. And when the eyelids grow heavy from learning their new lessons, the hectoring avant-garde

⁹ FIRST FIGURE, by Michael Palmer. North Point Press. \$8.50.

voice, taking umbrage and growing hostile, preaches, "You must stay awake until this ends."

You *can* stay awake in Michael Palmer's book because he can write.

winter a seamless wall winter bent double each word
misspoken
red dress coral necklace one or two things have been
said

and now I say yes

"Idem 4"

And so do I. But if one has no patience for such self-consciousness, then *caveat emptor*.

In his new book,¹⁰ his second, John Koethe completes the long task of turning John Ashbery into William Wordsworth. It is a worthwhile business, since Ashbery himself is loath to complete the assignment, and Koethe with his natural lyric gift and clarity of meditation is perfectly suited.

The deep chords of our being are outside history
In disappointment and change,
Disappointment and the possibility of change,
And then finally only disappointment.
Why should we end there?

"The Narrow Way"

If John Ashbery didn't exist, John Koethe would have to invent him. Koethe is a much less maddening poet, much less funny, too, and much less given to the risk of obliterating his meaning through leaps from one kind of diction to another. But does this evener approach make him less good than Ashbery? Personally, I think it makes him better.

Koethe has learned the power of banality from Ashbery, especially in utterance, and will begin a poem with a line like "I can't tell you much about it yet" or "I think I like this room" which immediately hints that something must be stirring below. Then, the language will increase in lyric complexity and the poem will end on a plangent or poignant note: "But now that part is over" or "Inside the lengthening shell of that first sudden cry." This is not always the case; just as often the banality of statement is sustained throughout the poem, ending it with the same wistful shrug that it began. But there is one technique that sets Koethe apart from Ash-

¹⁰ THE LATE WISCONSIN SPRING, by John Koethe. Princeton University Press. \$14.95.

bery and that is his use of the iambic pentameter line. One of the best poems in this collection, "A Long Lesson," is like an "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" done in somberer colors, without the Pindaric variations, but with moments of what could only be called sublimity, in an old fashioned sense.

He might have lifted me through the leaves,
Over the houses where the hate was sleeping,
Through the sunlight; and I might have seen
Immaculate with snow, the floating mountains
Limiting the world, a world so beautiful.

Poets born in the 1950s are divided much as those born in the 1940s. But now I'm talking about my generation, and my own prejudices favor narrative poetry of the sort practiced by Gary Soto, Eric Pankey, and Sharona Ben-Tov.

Gary Soto probably has the most natural narrative gift of any poet in his generation. His new volume,¹¹ his fourth, demonstrates once again that with the simple particularities of a day beginning Soto can establish a genuine storytelling voice.

Today it's going to cost us twenty dollars
To live. Five for a softball. Four for a book,
A handful of ones for coffee and two sweet rolls,
Bus fare, rosin for your mother's violin.
"How Things Work"

In the above passage he is speaking to his daughter, to whom many poems in the second half of this book are addressed. In the book's first half the poems are mainly reminiscences of childhood and growing up; Soto has few equals on those themes.

There are 49 poems in this collection of 78 pages, and the longest, "Ode to the Yard Sale," is in the ultrashort line Soto has made a trademark. What happens in poem after poem is that Soto finishes almost as soon as he begins. Despite his way with a story, his aim is song. I have a quarrel with him about this because this lyrical tendency often sentimentalizes the poem's narrative structure. "Oranges" is a typical example. Remembering the first time he walked with a girl, at twelve years old, Soto tells about not having enough money to buy her the candy she wanted and silently presenting to the shopkeeper as barter one of two oranges instead of the needed change. The orange is silently accepted. Afterwards, the girl eats her chocolate, the boy his orange, "That was so bright against / The gray of December / That, from some distance, / Someone might have thought / I was making a fire in my hands." The image has a

¹¹ BLACK HAIR, by Gary Soto. Wesleyan University Press. \$6.95.

peculiar power but because it is stronger than the story, which is already close to sentimentality, it pushes the little tale the rest of the way toward mawkishness.

Usually the effect is not so extreme and the modesty of the effort simply reflects Soto's honesty and humble knowledge about the way the world works, especially as he explains it to his little girl.

Gary Soto has become keenly sensitive not only about fatherhood but the whole domestic milieu. "Shopping for a Woman" may be the best poem in the entire collection; less than 25 lines, it is full of the imagery of masculine apprehensiveness. "Is this what women / Want?" he asks the clerk and she responds, "Sometimes." The moment is perfect for the sort of poem Soto has chosen to write.

The chilly empty atmosphere of the winter self, as if the world were hibernating, occupies the first two sections of Eric Pankey's Walt Whitman Award winner.¹² Then, in section three, entitled "Tending the Garden," another world opens up. Here Pankey imagines Horatio at Elsinore, speaks in the voice of Cain, addresses Vallejo, and assumes the characters of a railroad bull and a survivor of a Nazi death camp. The latter may seem an overworked subject, but I would argue that Pankey's clarity makes the poem exceptional.

The other prisoners were envious
of our duty. It was, at times, hard work,
but the work, it seems, promoted our health.
I was determined to stay well, to last
through the coming winter and not end up
face up in a grave my own hands had dug.
"Tending the Garden"

In writing of such apparent simplicity, words like *duty*, *promoted*, *determined*, and *health* resonate with their special meaning, and the cunning word play of "end up / face up" is nearly subliminal. Frankly, I admire this, for the narrative poem as such might seem to have no time for these effects, and yet, as in Frost, these are the very things we go back to, discovering them because originally the story interested us.

Pankey does have other poems in other voices in the first two sections of his book, but they sound more like exercises. The first poem is in the voice of Chekhov, dying at Yalta, but it is mainly a piece of word-painting. Elsewhere the mist, lowering or lifting, and atmospheric nuances of estrangement and union take the place of event, replacing story with details, as in the hedonistic early work of Robert Hass.

¹² FOR THE NEW YEAR, by Eric Pankey. Atheneum. \$7.95.

This is what I wanted most:

the snow revealing itself,
the slow kind laughter of friends,

a dust of frost, a morning's
tender dull blue arriving.

This light after the body's
pleasure. Always this light.
"For the New Year"

Linger over the detail about the way friends laugh or ought to laugh, think about it, and it ceases to be real; this is a problem of Pankey as "poet." But Pankey as narrator speaks with an authority, in his best poems, that comes of understanding his subject. When Cain utters the first two lines of "To Abel," "I give it up—the earth, what it held for me. / I give it to you, brother, like a caress," a poet who knows his business (with a little help from Baudelaire) is at work.

An annoying jacket note on S. Ben-Tov's highly accomplished first volume¹³ suggests that she is immune to "the epidemic of solipsism that blights so many writers of her generation." First, in response to that, I would say that more poets of her generation are exploring avenues out of the self than any poetic generation has for some time, hence the increasing work in narrative. Second, if solipsism presumes that the self's obscure references and hermetic imagery are of interest to others, as I believe it does, then Ben-Tov is as solipsistic as any poet around, for her greatest failing is obscurity.

One of her best poems, "The Summer of the Wild Artichokes," is about coming of age in Israel, a nation at war, and also seeing the differences of this awakening in the U.S.—but the various sides to her ambivalence are never clear. This obscurity and its attendant incoherence also mar her title poem, which is also about Israel. What she thinks of the conflict there is never clear as it is in, for example, Shirley Kaufman's *Claims*; the maturity of the older poet and her lack of solipsism are reflected in that long poem's clarity and coherence. Here is a passage from "The Summer of the Wild Artichokes" that is quite similar to one in Kaufman's book.

We memorize the names
of things with bombs in them:
purses, buttons, candy, stuffed animals.
Names don't matter—
love, victory, State of Israel—

¹³ DURING CEASEFIRE, by S. Ben-Tov. Harper & Row. \$15.95.

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all wrap bombs. Between
the bomb and the wrapping
the only thing left
unsuspect, is to act.

What action does Ben-Tov propose that would not be suspect? The quoted passage comes after one describing a woman who has lost both legs in a supermarket bombing; after having lost her husband in 1956 and her son in 1967, she is, as the poet points out, ironically called "brave." Is it the use of words then that is suspect, the very act of naming and judging that is a function of language? If so, then for the sake of her poetry, I hope Ben-Tov resolves her quandary.

This poet has an extraordinary rhetorical power. Although her narrative skill is clearest in the book's opening poem, "Elegy at a Samurai Movie," her gorgeous singing voice is hard to hold back. "Carillon for Cambridge Women," flawed as it is by the sort of obscurity I have mentioned, still takes off, flying high and low:

The singing grass walks in all our flesh.
I know fear kept me back, but joy undid me,
so even the threat of death cannot contain me.
White sails, inspired with sun, tacking out of the harbor,
pinned in the windows of the elevated train
before it rushes under,
who will remember us?

Although she does not have Soto's mature clarity or Pankey's negative capability, Ben-Tov's ambition exceeds theirs and so, possibly, does her gift. The prospect of her growth as a poet is one instance of what makes her generation more exciting than any other writing today.

JAMES FINN COTTER

Crossing Robert Bridges

THERE IS POETIC JUSTICE in the fact that we come across the name of Robert Bridges most frequently today as the friend of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bridges was an ambiguous friend, one not to be crossed. When his Jesuit correspondent confessed that he had sympathy for the Communist cause (not their methods) because of public exploitation of the poor, Bridges stopped writing to him, and it was Hopkins who several years later patched matters up. In his two-volume edition of Bridges' selected letters,¹ Donald E. Stanford notes that Sir Henry Newbolt risked breaking his friendship with Bridges by not limiting American participation in the Society of Pure English, which Bridges had founded. Throughout his life, friends and loved ones had to follow Bridges' way or risk being cut off.

Nowhere is this stubbornness more evident than in his handling of the publication of Hopkins' poetry. In a recent issue of *The Hopkins Quarterly*, Bridges is called "a rat" for his lack of sympathy and acumen toward Hopkins who complained against the "long jobation about eccentricities" that usually greeted his poetry when Bridges read it. Bridges referred to "The Wreck of the Deutschland" as "presumptuous jugglery" and vowed he would not for any money look at it again. Hopkins replied, nobly: "Besides money, you know, there is love." When Bridges finally did publish the poems in 1918 thirty years after Hopkins' death, he wrote a preface in which he accused the poet of "faults of taste" and "artistic wantonness" and bemoaned the "blemishes" and "extravagances" in the poetry.

Bridges has his defenders among Hopkins scholars who point out that he alone preserved the poems and printed them in a carefully edited, attractive edition. Over the thirty years, Bridges had inserted some of the poems into his own and other anthologies, including his popular wartime collection, *The Spirit of Man*, with the understanding that he was gradually preparing readers for the shock of the strange poems themselves, even that "dragon at the gate," the "Deutschland."

Others wondered what he was up to and were growing impatient. In 1909, Father Joseph Keating, S.J., tried to obtain publication

¹ THE SELECTED LETTERS OF ROBERT BRIDGES, edited by Donald E. Stanford. University of Delaware Press. 2 volumes. \$65.00.

rights from Hopkins' family (actually, the Jesuits owned the rights all along), but Bridges wrote to Gerard's mother that he did not think her son would have wanted "those fellows" to edit his poems. In the same year, he dismissed Edmund Gosse's proposed editorship of the poems as "his accustomed presumption" and part of a "scheme of 'booming' Roman Catholic pretensions to artistic eminence: just as they pull all the strings to glorify Francis Thompson." He added: "When the time comes, 'If ever that time comes' I should wish a selection of Gerard's letters to accompany his poems."

Why this reluctance to see the poems in print? Bridges made no secret of his reason; he wrote Brett Young in 1914:

But as for Gerard Hopkins, I am his literary executor, and a lot of people want his poetry to be published. It is owing to me that what of it is known is known, and I am glad that what I have already done for him has been to his credit. But to go further is very difficult. The edition—though I would not shrink from that—is most forbidding, for he has some 3, 4, or even 5 versions of the same poem. But the main objection to publishing is the very difficult and unpopular nature of the work. What I have printed are just the very few things that people would stand (at least such is my opinion), and a further revelation of him would provoke only adverse criticism and ridicule. However, you will see that my position is very difficult: for I am really (by my doing nothing) laying myself open to the charge of suppressing the work of a man to whose originality I owe so much.

The rub lies in the last remark, for Bridges as early as 1879, ten years before Hopkins' death, had written poems in sprung rhythm (or his version of it) and had privately acknowledged his debt to the Jesuit poet. In 1890, he told Mrs. Hopkins of his decision not to publish the poems right away because of his inability to write a "memoir":

I should myself prefer the postponement of the poems till the memoir is written, *or* till I have got my own method of prosody recognized separately from Gerard's. They are the same, and he has the greater claim than I do to the origination of it, but he has used it so as to discredit it: and it would be a bad start in favour for the practice we both advocated and wished to be used.

Clearly, Bridges had much to gain by withholding the poems, whether or not this was his real reason for doing so. Only he could know that.

All this would be water under the bridge, except that the thirty years of obscurity for Hopkins meant that many of his papers, letters, and even poems were forever lost. The lack of a scholarly bi-

ography of the poet reflects that gap that can never be spanned. By acting as the sole passage of the poems to posterity, Bridges deserves gratitude, but also blame.

What of the rest of Bridges' life as it appears in his letters? Whist and gardening take their place alongside prosody and hymn-writing. His wife and two daughters were often sick (there was a tubercular cow on their estate), and his son Edward—later a celebrated statesman and a Lord—was seriously wounded in World War I. But Bridges was not easily budged by adversity. This graduate of Eton and Corpus Christi College at Oxford practiced medicine for a few years until he almost died of pneumonia; then he retired and lived as a country gentleman for over fifty years. He was sixty-nine when named Poet Laureate in 1913, seventy-four when he edited Hopkins' poetry, and eighty-five when he died. "The Testament of Beauty," published in the last year of his life, went through fourteen printings in its first year. Bridges took the success in stride, explaining that this was Providence's way of taking care of his expenses.

Readers of "The Testament" who are attracted by its theory of aesthetics will be disappointed by the almost total absence of philosophical thought in the letters. At one point, Bridges reflects that each individual is a kind of cosmic center expanding outward through people and places marked out by self into a concentric universe (a similar idea is found in Hopkins), but for the most part the subject of religious inquiry only uncovers his deep anti-clerical bias. He finds "the whole clerical position a historical, developmental, opportunism," and he is as hard on the Anglican as he is on the Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. He has a daughter confirmed but wishes her free from the ritualistic superstition and foppery. When he finally reads James Joyce in old age, he is happy to recognize his own view of the Jesuits in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Or so he assumes.

Bridges corresponded with some of the leading writers of his day: William Butler Yeats, A. E. Housman, Samuel Butler, G. K. Chesterton, Walter De la Mare, Robert Graves, John Masefield, George Saintsbury, and George Bernard Shaw. Other than inviting them for weekends, discussing railroad schedules, or joining some common linguistic or literary cause, Bridges never reveals anything of his inner self. Perhaps he may have done so with Hopkins, but we will never know since he destroyed his side of the correspondence. The main recipient of his friendship and letters was Lionel Muirhead, a fellow Etonian and another country gentleman of limited interests, like traveling and dinner invitations, whose letters, for some reason, are included in Stanford's edition.

Some of the better letters are to Roger Fry, the painter and art theorist. Their friendship too almost collapsed over the portraits of Bridges that Fry painted in 1923. Bridges was so cross about them

that at first he said nothing and then sent Fry passport photographs to show what he really looked like. "If I died without any other record it would be supposed that I had suffered from acute melancholy, and my flesh had undergone a visible adipoceros decomposition before death," he wrote, humorlessly. Earlier, Fry had responded enthusiastically to Hopkins' poems when he read them in manuscript. Bridges sent a copy of the printed edition of the poetry to Fry's art workshop, which he had named *Omega*. He answered:

I have for years been a fervent admirer of the pieces you had let out here and there, so you may judge of my delight when I found it at the Omega—after all a most suitable place for I find myself curiously in sympathy with all the scraps I have yet found of his aesthetic—his "inscape"; that's what we are after, however much we miss it.

It was too bad that Bridges himself missed so much of it.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID EHRENFELD* is the author of *The Arrogance of Humanism* and of two books on conservation, and is co-author of *The Chameleon Variant*, a science-fiction novel. He is Professor of Biology at Rutgers University.

The Quality Paperback Book Club gave its first New Voice Award to SUSAN KENNEY for her book *Another Country*. Her next book, *Graves in Academe*, will appear in the fall. Ms. Kenney teaches literature and creative writing at Colby College and lives in Maine.

ROBERT McDOWELL's next contribution to *The Hudson Review* will be a review of the University of Michigan Press's *Poets on Poetry* series.

MARK JARMAN's latest book of poetry is *Far and Away*, published by Carnegie-Mellon University. He teaches at Vanderbilt University.

T. R. HUMMER's forthcoming book of poems *Lower-Class Heresy*, will be published by the University of Illinois Press.

JEANNE FOSTER HILL has two books of poetry: *Great Horned Owl* and *A Blessing of Safe Travel*.

MARK PERLBERG is author of *The Burning Field* and *The Feel of the Sun*. He has almost finished his third book of poems.

JEROME MAZZARO's most recent book, *The Figure of Dante* (1981), was published by Princeton University Press.

W. R. JOHNSON* has had three books published and is a Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature now living in Chicago.

ROBERT LEITER,* an editor at *Inside* magazine, is currently at work on a novel tentatively titled *The Texture of Desire*.

JEFFERSON HUNTER will return to teaching English at Smith College after a year at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina where he wrote a book on photography and modern literature.

HARRY GOLDFAR* recently retired from his position as editorial writer for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*.

*Asterisk indicates a new contributor

HARRY GOLDGAR

Hugo's Fiction: Visions of the Master

"Merde!" yelled General Pierre Jacques Etienne Cambronne when pressed to surrender his remnant of the Imperial Guard at Waterloo. That defiant oath flung in the teeth of the British made famous an otherwise obscure officer, a mere *passant* as Victor Hugo classes him in the long Waterloo section of *Les Misérables*; it also created among nice people a euphemism—*mot de Cambronne*—for excrement. U.S. General Anthony McAuliffe's "Nuts!" to the enemy a hundred miles from Waterloo makes a pleasant twentieth-century echo.

However, for Hugo "Cambronne's word" had a reverberation far beyond the anecdotal. "By challenging the power of guns with the lowliest of words, by refusing to be silent," explains Professor Victor Brombert of Princeton, "Cambronne-Hugo affirmed not the prestige of the latrine but the power of the word." When *le dernier des mots* becomes *le dernier mot*, it attains, in Hugo's own phrase, "Aeschylean grandeur." Brombert pursues: "The symbolic victory of *merde* is of course not simply a linguistic matter. In concrete, literal terms, all battles, Hugo would say, end in mud, excrement, and putrefaction. That is the outcome of all violence. The pattern is structurally repeated later in *Les Misérables*. The heroic butchery at the barricades quite logically leads to a descent into the sewers—an immersion that is clearly regenerative." Furthermore, the plebeian laughter associated with Cambronne's exclamation is politically significant: it "corresponds to the dynamic laughter of the oppressed who say *no* in order to reaffirm *yes*. Such laughter is revolutionary in nature." It leads directly to the laughter of Gavroche, the irrepressible *gamin* of the streets.

Brombert's analysis of Cambronne's "victory" is a small example of his brilliant deconstructionist scrutiny of Hugo's novels as well as an introduction to some of the recurrent motifs that define their "visionary" quality. For all of the novels taken together form a magnificent *oeuvre* in which certain themes are sounded again and again. Regeneration from below is one; the people's revolutionary laughter is another.

After the earliest novels, *Han d'Islande* and *Bug-Jargal*, and *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné*, which opened his lifelong crusade against capital punishment, Hugo in 1831 published the first of his *romans*

poèmes, the first prose epic, sprawling, grandiose, mythopoeic (Brombert spells it “mythopoetic”): *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The subject, or one of the subjects—the cathedral—was architecture and the structure was architectonic. The novel takes place in 1482 and makes much of Gutenberg’s invention. “The novel about a cathedral,” writes Brombert, “is thus also a novel about the political—and by implication revolutionary—responsibility of the printed word”; the invention of printing is called “the greatest event in history.”

Like many liberal intellectuals then and now, Hugo, the converted aristocrat, was afflicted with a “malaise toward the lower classes,” whose revolutions he at the same time applauded. The easy camaraderie of the streets and the marketplace was foreign to him. In *Notre-Dame de Paris*, and throughout his fiction, *le peuple*, the masses, shades off into the *populace* (always a pejorative term), then into the *canaille* (the rabble). When the mob assaults the cathedral he is reminded of the assault on the Bastille 300 years later, but the tone of the narrative is not one of approval. The wild laughter of the people, their *fou rire*, returns in later novels, until in 1869 it is the subject of a novel, *L’Homme qui rit*. Still the central message of *Les Misérables* remains, that “moral and political salvation is to come from below.”

Brombert shows almost exhaustively, in his discussion of this and later novels, that the perspective of Hugo’s fiction is not linear but vertical. There is as much of the medieval cathedral underground as above ground. The artist’s or sensitive character’s plunge downward into dreams and reverie is another aspect of this verticality. As for linearity, Hollywood’s “Hunchback of Notre-Dame” notwithstanding, *Notre-Dame de Paris* is not a historical novel. In fact, Hugo remarked at the end of his life that he had never written a historical novel. He has generally been thought of as a historical meliorist, but actually, writes Brombert, he was “hostile to history.” “The vertical insight corresponds to the transhistorical vision of the prophet, whose atemporal perception is radically alien to the chronological, linear, progressive time of history.” Mankind must be liberated from the “forest of events.”

Hugo’s enormous public had to wait thirty years for the next of the grand vatic novels, *Les Misérables*. The catastrophe of Waterloo, 1815, the fall of Napoleon, is also the year of Jean Valjean’s emergence from prison; the traditional epic hero (Bonaparte) is displaced by the collective *tout homme* (“Valjean” was in earlier drafts “Vlajean”—“Voilà Jean”). “By the time of *Les Misérables*,” explains Brombert, “Hugo had developed the theory of an epic concerned with the great adventure of mankind, in particular with the destiny of the oppressed, redeemable, and ultimately redeeming *peuple*, toward whom his deepest reactions remained, however, characteristically ambiguous.” The underground imagery in *Les Misérables*, the adventure of the sewers, even the base argot of the Parisian under-

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world, reinforces the notion of the *misérables* as the carriers of redemption. And the death of Valjean merges the themes of individual and collective redemption: he is "the proletarian Christ" (in Brombert's phrase) whose spiritual adventure runs parallel to "the fall and rehabilitation of Satan in Hugo's mythology."

More than any other of Hugo's fictions, *Les Misérables*, with its cloacal-underworld preoccupation and its heroic initiation theme, seems to me to cry out for Jungian interpretation. But such a reading is far from Victor Brombert's concerns. He does refer, in his chapter on *Les Travailleurs de la mer*, to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a treatise on the initiation archetype, but with a mere nod. Freudian insights also would be helpful. For instance, Brombert writes eloquently of Hugo's fear of sex, reflected in the character Gilliatt of *Les Travailleurs de la mer* who "refuses the violence of passion." Writing about *L'Homme qui rit*, Brombert says Hugo perceived the "inexorable call of sex" as "an alienation from the self, a threat to the integrity of being." But he never deviates from his deconstructionist reading of the text.

It is in *Les Travailleurs de la mer* (1866) that Hugo finally writes a true epic novel. Gilliatt's exploit in rescuing the engine of the shipwrecked steamer and his battle with the giant octopus are of epic dimensions, and the language of trope and antithesis is "Homeric." This book is constructed upon a vertical axis as well, as in Gilliatt's submersion and in the "architecture" of creation beneath the ocean. The ocean itself is chaos; chaos supplies life; creation is, in Hugo's words, "a decomposition immediately recomposed"; revolutionary progress feeds on ruin. Thus the artist, as Hugo says in an unpublished note, "struggles with God."

Throughout *Les Travailleurs de la mer*, Brombert writes, "there is the suspicion that all creation is dark . . . , an abyss. . . . Increasingly, Hugo seemed haunted by the belief that poetic vision depends on the dangerous intimacy with evil, that God and the artist join in a theology of shadows." Dark indeed is the next novel, *L'Homme qui rit* of 1869, the most completely "visionary" for its subject is "the adventures of the soul." Although its protagonist on account of a facial disfigurement wears a perpetual grimace, there is no carefree laughter here. Instead an ambiance of carnival and theater provokes from the people a joyless laughter that signifies revolution. As in the previous novels, "the act of poetic creation itself can be suspected of complicity with the forces of darkness." Verticality—plunging downward to the abyss of evil and suffering—is thus the way of the visionary. "What Hugo proposes is nothing less than the sinister textual presence of the vatic artist, the accomplice of the unnameable dark, the *poète noir*."

Undaunted by his exploration of these cosmic issues in his fiction, Hugo in his last novel, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (1874), attempted to deal with the nature of history. During The Terror the hero, Gauvain (Gawain), a young Republican commander, a converted aristocrat,

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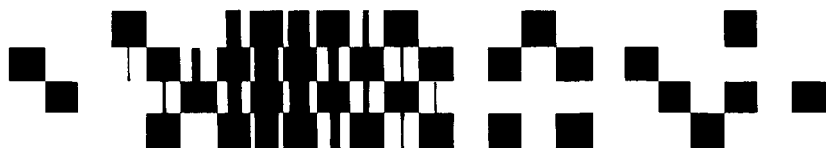
returns to his ancestral castle in Brittany. "Homecoming is an act of violence. The native son returns as the liberating enemy." Several small children trapped in the castle's library destroy a rare book, "raising the specter of the self-destructive core of revolutionary ideology," for the real battlefield of '93 is the human mind. The style of the book is antithesis and oxymoron, reflecting the central antithesis of creation versus violence which has been at the core of all of Hugo's novels. But "the network of antitheses serves a strategy of reconciliation. In Hugo's optics, everything tends toward fusion." Whether violence is therefore justifiable remains an open question. Hugo is left with his "horror of history."

Victor Hugo himself liked to read his visionary novels, Brombert shows, as "allegories of salvation and rebirth." But the books remain antithetical, ambiguous, "polyvalent" and problematic. Hugo was quite conscious that they could be read on several levels. At least, through Professor Brombert's intense readings, we now know certain things about them and their author: We know that Hugo's faith in the common people, which has been generally accepted here and in France, is the most contradictory antithesis of all, for he actually deeply mistrusted the masses. His distrust of the "linearity of history" is just as deep-seated. Instead, "figures of verticality," like the inverted or reflected tower, or the recurring *abîme*, are integral to his orphic vision. "Penetrating into the unnameable dark is the function of the visionary artist"; it is "an enigmatic commerce with evil." Writing itself then becomes an act at once sacred and tragic. Among Hugo's papers, Brombert ran across this "astonishing sentence": "Evil, in nature as well as in destiny, is a dark beginning of God continuing beyond us into the invisible."

Victor Hugo was the supreme Romantic figure of the nineteenth century, his last novel, *Quatre-vingt-treize*, appearing in 1874 when the tide of Romanticism had long since turned, when Zola had already published, or was about to publish, the fourth volume of the Rougon-Macquart series. Nothing is more quintessentially Romantic than Hugo's visionary manner, his cosmic themes, his *romans épopées*, his sixty-year excursion into the dark places of the heart. It is surprising, then, that in this book the word "Romantic" does not once occur. Perhaps Brombert simply wants to avoid the obvious, just as he has avoided the contributions that biography or analytical psychology could make to his subject. Of course, there is already a library-full of these sorts of studies of Hugo; now that the centenary of his death is at hand, there will be more. Instead, Brombert has produced a true masterpiece of the textual-linguistic-deconstructionist school, with more lovely insights on a page than the other kind of book contains in a long chapter. It is a pity that Victor Hugo is not a fashionable author in the United States, and that even in France Hugolians are scarcer than they used to be. Still, people who are not especially interested in Victor Hugo but who are interested in what contemporary criticism can do will enjoy this elegant example.

PYNCHON

The Voice of Ambiguity



Thomas Hill Schaub

"This is the book with which any serious reader of Pynchon will have to start from now on. Schaub shows that Pynchon's work is about how we make certain kinds of apparent disorder mean what we want, and why meaning, so arrived at, is bad for us. . . . Pynchon wants to make it impossible to read his multi-vocal text simply; setting free the voices, Schaub cleanses them of static but not of their ambiguity." — Khachig Tololyan, *Village Voice Literary Supplement*.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

A garden with over 100 varieties of moss, its gently undulating emerald carpet is inflected by the trunks of artfully placed trees, which rise up some distance before their branches flower. The result is a sort of outdoor building, one of the few Kyoto gardens that needs primarily to be walked through. Since it is almost entirely a composition in green, the Koke-dera is not only a garden of particular harmony but is the quintessential summer garden. The filtering of the sunlight through the trees, unlike the dappling of Ryōan-ji, emphasizes its unworldly reticence.

—Charles Millard, “The Gardens of Kyoto in Summer,” p. 182.

What Orwell understood, what gave him one of the greatest claims to the title of prophet, and what makes his prophecy useful and valid today—the idea he developed but never had time to finish and polish—is that neither of the great contemporary social theory/systems, socialism and capitalism, has been able satisfactorily to encompass both human relationships *and* the problems of the environment. Socialism was his personal choice, but he knew that socialism, as practiced, does not have room for both people and their non-political world of nature and agriculture.

—David Ehrenfeld, “Orwell and Nature,” p. 193.

In our time, the weight of the past has become particularly burdensome for living composers and performers, who must contend not only with legend and the tendency of memory to enhance strengths and erase weaknesses, but with the accumulation of three centuries of printed scores and one of recordings—a massive psychic impediment that Brahms epitomized when he said that he could not set pen to music paper without hearing the “tread of the master” (Beethoven) behind him.

—Robert S. Clark, “Music Chronicle,” p. 281.